

THE
STORY OF A DACOITY
AND
THE LOLAPUR WEEK

G. K. BETHAM.

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AND

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AN UP-COUNTRY SKETCH

BY

G. K. BETHAM
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THE STORY OF A DACOITY.

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GLOSSARY.

- ANNA.—A copper coin equivalent to about one penny half-penny of English money ; sixteen annas make one rupee.
- AONLI.—(*Phyllanthus emblica*.)
- APPA.—An affix signifying Mr. or Sir.
- ARRE.—An exclamation equivalent to alas ! and also to halloo !
- AVAL-KARKUN.—Head-clerk.
- AYAH.—A native Indian waiting-woman.
- BABUL.—(*Acacia Arabica*.), supposed to be the shittim tree of the Bible.
- BAI.—Woman ; used also to designate a female of position as “ Bai Luxmi,” *i.e.*, “ Lady Luxmi.”
- BANIAN.—A jersey or under-vest.
- BARRA-SINGH.—The swamp-deer (*Rucervus Dewancellii*.) The twelve-horned deer ; the name means twelve horns, or points ; but fourteen and fifteen points are not uncommon in old stags ; they have been shot with even seventeen. (Jerdon.)
- BEDER.—In former days Bèders were hunters and soldiers by profession, now their principal occupations are agriculture, labour, and Government service as peons and village police.
- BETEL.—The areca palm (*areca catechu*.)
- BHAGWAN.—The unknown, or invisible God.
- BHAWA.—(*Cassia fistula*.)
- BOR.—(*Zizyphus jujuba*.)
- BORAH.—A travelling pedlar.

- BRAHMA.**—The chief member of the Trimurti or Hindu Trinity, *i.e.*, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva.
- BRATTIES.**—Cow-dung cakes dried in the sun, and used as fuel in those parts of the country where there is a scarcity of fire-wood.
- BUSWA.**—(Or Basava.) The founder of the Lingayet sect; the name means bull, and Buswa was, in fact, regarded as the incarnation of Nandi, the bull of Siva.
- CASTE.**—Almost impossible to define. “Rank in society of an exclusive nature due to birth” (Nuttall.); but it means a great deal more than this.
- CHADDAR.**—A sheet; a shawl; a covering for the body. Rampur chaddars—that is, chaddars manufactured at Rampur (a small semi-independent state in the north-west provinces of India) are famous for their texture, warmth, colour and durability.
- CHEROOT.**—A cigar open at both ends; the leaves of which it is composed are usually wrapped tightly round a straw.
- CHINKARA.**—(*Gazelle Bennettii.*) A frequenter of sandy hills and bare, barren, spots.
- CHITNIS.**—The head (vernacular) clerk. He is a personage of great importance, as all vernacular papers pass through his hands, and are read by him to the Collector.
- CERULEANS.**—A name borrowed, with many apologies, from the title of Sir Henry Stewart Cunningham’s book.
- COLLECTOR.**—The chief civil (revenue) officer in a district; or, as it is sometimes termed, collectorate.
- COLLECTORATE.**—A district; that portion of country administered by a Collector.
- COMPOUND.**—Yard or garden; the grounds attached to a house.
- CUMBLI.**—A coarse blanket, much used by natives of all the lower grades, and especially by the agricultural classes.
- DACOIT.**—One who commits “dacoity,” or who is a member of a robber-band.

DACOITY.—Robbery in gangs, accompanied by violence.

DAK.—The mode of transmitting letters in the East ; the post ; also applied to the method of travelling with relays of animals stationed along the road.

DESHMI.—Bread cooked in milk ; a Brahmin may not eat meat, nor may he partake of food cooked by anyone or touched by anyone, but a Brahmin. On long journeys this dèshmi is the usual stand-by.

DEWAN.—Prime Minister ; head councillor.

DHARAMSALA.—Literally charity-house ; a building erected for the free use of travellers in need of shelter.

DURBAR.—An audience chamber ; a state-reception.

DURGA DEVI.—(Also known as Kali and Chamundi.) The goddess of cholera, small-pox, measles, &c. ; she would seem to be the author of cattle disease also. She is supposed to send these epidemics on those who have incurred her wrath, and can only be appeased by the shedding of blood. In former days human victims were offered at her shrine ; now a buffalo is sacrificed to her annually. As an instance of the dread in which she is held, it is enough to mention the fact, that the awful famine of 1396 and succeeding years is still known as the Durga Dèvi.

DUSTOOR.—Custom ; habit ; the term is also applied to douceurs, where those douceurs are usually given and expected ; it is, in fact, another disguise of the well-known English tip, and the still more aggressive Egyptian “Bakshish.”

FERINGHI.—Infidel. An epithet applied by Mussulmans to all who are not of their faith ; usually employed, however, to indicate European unbelievers.

FLORICAN.—(Florikin) (*Sypheotides auritus*.) The lesser Florican.

FOUZDAR.—Head-constable ; the chief police official in a *Taluka*.

GHEE.—Clarified butter.

GHORA-LOGUE.—English people, more especially English soldiers ; means literally horse-people, *i.e.*, people tall and big like horses.

GHORA-WALLA.—Horse-keeper or groom.

GONDS.—A semi-wild tribe of the Dravidian stock, met with principally in the Berars and the Central Provinces.

GOWDA.—Head man ; the one responsible to Government for the due observance of order, the collection of the land revenue, &c., in the village in which he resides. "Gowda" is Canarese, and means precisely the same thing that "Patel" does in Mahrathi.

GUZAR.—Primarily an inhabitant of Guzerat ; the term is now applied to merchants and money-lenders, or usurers.

GYMKHANA.—The place of games ; a term used to designate the spot where the lawn tennis and badminton courts, the cricket ground, &c., are located.

HAKIM.—A wise man ; a physician.

HAMAL.—A porter ; also the servant whose duty it is to sweep the rooms, dust the furniture, make the beds, &c.

HOOKAH.—A pipe, the smoke of which is inhaled through water ; secondarily, any pipe that is passed round and used in common.

JEMADAR.—A native officer answering very much to our sergeant.

JOWARI.—(*Sorghum Vulgare*.) The great millet.

KACHERI.—A public office.

KHIND.—A gap, pass, or saddle in a range of hills.

KOSHTI-LOGUE.—Silk-weavers. They claim to be "kyshatriyas," that is to be in the second great division of castes, but they are, by common consent, relegated to the "sudras," or third division ; hence the allusion to their eating meat.

KRISHNA.—The Hindu Mars ; he also bears some resemblance to Hercules.

KULKARNI.—A village accountant ; the official who makes out the amount of rent, taxes, &c., payable by the people.

KURAN.—A grazing-ground ; the word is also applied to groves of acacia trees as “babul kurans” ; goats are very fond of the pods of the babul, hence the secondary meaning of the word.

KURUMURI.—Parched rice and gram ; (the chicken pea, *cicer arietinum*) ; this is used largely by the people for food, especially when travelling ; it is very sustaining, as the gram contains a large proportion of albumenoid.

LEEPED.—Smeared.

LINGUM.—(Or Ling.) A representation, usually in stone, of the male organ of generation ; worshipped as the source of life by a sect called “Lingayets.”

LOOT.—Plunder ; spoil.

LOTA.—A brass water vessel or bowl.

MAHAR.—An outcaste : almost the very lowest of the low. His duties in the village commonwealth are those of messenger, watchman, and scavenger : a certain portion of rent-free land is assigned to him in payment for the due performance of these services, and the flesh of all animals dying within the lands of the village in which he resides is his perquisite.

MAIDAN.—A plain ; an open level space.

MAMLATDAR.—The chief revenue officer in a Taluka ; his duties are both revenue and magisterial ; the Mamlatdar is, in fact, the most indispensable officer in the system of administration : he is, as it were, the key-stone of the arch of Government.

MANG.—An outcaste : the lowest of all on the social scale ; they are workers in leather, and the skins of all animals dying in the lands of the village in which they reside are their perquisite. The public executioner is always a Mang.

MANGO.—(*Mangifera indica*.) A variety of large plum : perhaps the most delicious fruit in existence.

- MASSAL**.—A coadjutor of the hamal's, his special duties are to clean the lamps, knives, boots, &c., and to wash-up after meals.
- MEM-SAHIB**.—A corruption of Madam or Ma'am—Sahib; a term applied by natives to English married ladies.
- MESS MAN**.—Caterer; the individual who supplies the food at travellers' bungalows.
- MOGUL**.—The great Mahomedan Emperor who resided at Delhi, and who was deposed at the time of the suppression of the Indian Mutiny; also a term applied to a sect of Mussalmen.
- NAIK**.—A leader; a rank in the native army corresponding very much to our corporal; a term applied to Beders as a class.
- NALAH**.—"Nulla," a small river, brook, rivulet, or watercourse.
- NEM**.—"Nim" (*Azadirachta indica*.) A moderate-sized tree of great beauty with white or lilac flowers; the leaves and bark, when bruised and made into a poultice possess very healing qualities. Every part of the tree is bitter to the taste, and the leaves, bark, seeds, and the oil extracted from the seeds are largely used in native medicine.
- OTA**.—The raised platform or dais in front of a house.
- PALAS**. (*Butea frondosa*) The bastard teak.
- PAN**.—A leaf (*Pan supari*.) The leaf of the pan or piper creeper, and the nut of the betel, or areca palm (see "Betel.")
- PANCH**.—Five; a term applied to a jury composed of five persons. This jury is convened for the purpose of enquiring into and settling knotty points, disputes, and to act on inquests, &c.
- PATEL**.—See above "Gowda."
- PATANG**.—A red powder, extracted from the wood of the sappan, or Brazil wood tree. (*Cæsalpinia sappan*.)
- PEDILWAX**.—A strong man; an athlete.
- PYJAMAS**.—Trousers or drawers, made usually of cotton, and tying round the waist with cord or string.

RAGI.—(*Eleusine corocana*.) Ragi (Canarese) Nachni, nagli (Mahrathi). An inferior kind of millet.

RAJ.—Kingdom ; government.

RAJA.—Prince, or king.

RAO-SAHIB.—A term applied to native gentlemen of position.

RAMOSI.—Watchman ; village policeman. A caste warlike in descent and taste, and also very lawless and predatory in their habits. They are largely employed as private watchmen by householders, although they are as a class thieves, apparently on the "*lucus sed non lucendo*" principle of setting a thief to catch a thief ; the system is really a species of blackmail, the house where a "ramosi" is employed being always safe from thieves. The Ramosis very much resemble the Bèders.

RANI-SAHIB.—Great Queen. The expression used when referring to H.I.M. the Queen Empress.

RYOT.—Cultivator ; farmer ; peasant.

SAHIB.—Gentleman : usually applied to Europeans.

SAHIB-LOGUE.—European gentlemen.

SAL.—(*Shorea robusta*.)

SALAAM.—A ceremonious Oriental salutation.

SALEI.—(*Boswellia thurifera*.) The gum exuding from this tree is the olibanum of commerce ; the frankincense of Dioscorides.

SARI.—The garment worn by Indian women.

SEPOY.—A native soldier, policeman, or messenger.

SHEITAN.—The devil ; a supernatural being of infernal origin.

SHIKAR.—Sport ; the pursuit of game.

SHIKARI.—A sportsman or huntsman.

SIDI.—An African, a negro : pronounced "seedee."

SISSU.—Or "sissoo" (*Dalbergiasissoo*.) The blackwood tree.

SIRKAR.—Government.

SOWAR.—A horseman ; mounted policeman ; a cavalry man.

SOWCAR.—A money-lender.

SUDDER.—Or "sadar." The chief, or principal.

TALUKA.—A revenue sub-division of a district, about as large as one of the larger English counties administered under the supervision of the Collector and his assistants by a native officer called the “Mamlatdar,” or “Tehsildar” (see above “Mamlatdar.”)

TAT.—Pony.

TAWARD.—(*Cassia auriculata*.)

TEMRU.—(*Diospyros montana*.) The ebony tree.

THILI.—Or “Til” (*Sesamum indicum*.)

TIFFIN.—Luncheon.

TONGA.—A broad, low cart, drawn by two animals which are usually harnessed curricule fashion ; these conveyances are not easily upset, can be driven over almost any road.

TOPE.—A grove, or clump of trees.

VAKIL.—An advocate ; a pleader.

VISHNU.—The second member of the Trimurti or Hindu Trinity.

WADAR.—A stone-mason.

WADI.—A hamlet.

WAH ! WAH !—Well ! well ! An exclamation expressive equally of approval, astonishment, and affliction.

WATAN.—Hereditary right

WATANDAR.—The holder of a hereditary right. The offices of the village, patel, kulkarni, mahar, &c., descend from father to son, and the right of succession is most jealously guarded by the possessors.



THE STORY OF A DACOITY.

CHAPTER I.

AN INDIAN VILLAGE.

HIREHGAON is a fairly large and well-to-do village, as villages go, in that part of the country where it is located, and seen from a little distance it possesses a certain amount of picturesqueness. It is situated on the banks of the river Gunga in a large tope of trees, principally mangoes—perhaps it would be more correct to say that it is surrounded by several topes of trees, for on a nearer approach it will be found that the trees are not actually in the village, but are scattered about in clumps and groves at distances varying from fifty to two hundred yards from the village itself. There are about one hundred and twenty houses all told, inclusive of two or three hamlets, which are affiliated to the main village, and the popu-

tion amounts to over five hundred souls (men, women and children.) Approaching Hirehgaon the traveller has, for many miles, to pass over a vast, monotonous, undulating plain, which is traversed by the high road from Lolapur to Jaffirabad ; the latter place is the capital of an independent native State, which lies on the boundary of the Lolapur Collectorate, and is under the control of the Collector of Lolapur in his capacity as political agent. Hirehgaon lies about half a mile to the east of this road. The river Gunga forms the southern boundary of Lolapur ; on crossing it, the territory of the Raja of Jaffirabad is entered. The main village is placed on high-lying ground below which flows the river Gunga, and is surrounded by fields, which at the time of year of which we are writing (the end of September) look green and flourishing, refreshing to the eye, and eloquent of a good harvest. Though the large plain spoken of looks so barren and unpromising (in the dry season) the country is not by any means a sterile one, good soil exists in the hollows and depressions of the rolling prairie, and bumper crops are raised in these whenever a favourable rainy season occurs. The fields imme-

diately surrounding the village are perhaps the most fertile ones, and this was probably one great motive in the choice of the village site; and now acre after acre of jowari, thili, cotton, and sugar-cane are waving, rustling, and bending to the soft afternoon wind. A closer inspection of Hirehgaon does away with a good deal of the enchantment lent by a more distant survey! The houses are built of a whitish grey earth, with solid walls and flat mud roofs; the only difference between the habitations of the wealthy members of the community and their less-favoured neighbours seems to be in the particular of size. The whole group of dwellings is surrounded by a low mud wall, and traces of a ditch are discernible here and there, carrying one's thoughts back to the days of plundering Pindari bands: *—bands now

* The lowest type of freebooters: they came into existence during the troublous times at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century. They were, in the first instance, enlisted under the standards of the various Mahratha leaders, but when the Mahratha power was fairly established, they carried on freebooting expeditions on their own account, and committed unspeakable atrocities, making themselves a terror and a scourge wherever they went. They were eventually put down by Sir John Malcolm in 1818.

numbered with the past. Well, sometimes you know accidents *will* happen in the best regulated families ; troublesome pests like dacoits, ramosi risings, famines, &c., *will* sometimes show their ugly heads ; however, they are suppressed as promptly as possible now-a-days, and taught manners. These are the days of school-boards ; the age of the schoolmaster, and such unsightly plagues are not spared the birch. They will speedily be improved off the face of the earth ; may the time come soon ! The nearer the village is approached, the less inviting does it appear. Right in front of the principal gateway, on the open bit of ground there, are a number of huts made apparently of matting, the temporary abodes of a wandering tribe of "wadars : " quarrelling women, crying children, snarling dogs, and braying donkeys. These are huddled together with a few sullen-looking, stolid-demeanoured men. Mixed up in an indescribable medley of filth, noise, and discomfort, they do not form a pleasing picture, the olfactory nerves are cruelly outraged, and one longs for eau-de-Cologne ! Let us pass on towards the gate and enter the village : a broad street flanked on either side by erections of

all sorts meets the eye ; the dwelling-houses are of the same description, and for the most part stand each by itself, with cowhouses and other domestic offices surrounding them. On either side of the road are well-paved V-shaped drains, but they seem to be used only by accident. Odoriferous garbage of every conceivable description lies about in admirable confusion, even to the very thresholds of the dwelling houses, and the condition of the cowhouses and stables simply defies description. Evidently the rains are the safeguard. No sahibs visits to fear ; no prying assistant-collector or keen-scented sanitary commissioner to storm and rave ; no fine village office-bearers to turn dirty, sleepy Hirehgaon upside down. "No ! in the rains we can be as comfortable as we please," says old Bai Luxumi, the kulkurni's maternal grandmother, as she mumbles and munches along on her long walking-stick. "Bhagwan be praised, the sahibs cannot travel in the rains !" Next hot weather the cholera ogre takes the old lady away with him, but the survivors who are of her way of thinking merely say, "Arre, she was very old ; her time was come !" and King Cholera's preserves are re-

ligiously kept up in spite of sanitary commissioners, energetic collectors, local self-government, and enthusiastic municipal commissioners; there is a good time coming, there are signs of its approach even now, but the actual advent is still a considerable distance away.

Here is the village "chowdi," where the village fathers do congregate of an evening to discuss the village politics; to-day there is evidently something of an exciting nature on hand, judging from the raised voices and animated gestures of the small parliament. The two chief figures are both elderly men, and from their demeanour it appears that they are both deeply, and probably personally, interested in the question that is being discussed. One is a tall, big man, of portly presence, and, in spite of his evident excitement, of dignified manner; his opponent is also above the average height of natives, but he is spare, and the expression of his face is disagreeable, amounting almost to malignity. These two are the chief men in Hirschgaon; the stout man is known as Rudra Patel, or Rudra Gowda, while his adversary bears the name of Bhimoo Patel, or Bhimoo Gowda.

"Patel" and "Gowda" meaning the same in Mahrathi and Canarese, the terms are interchangeable in Hirehgaon, which is situated in a tract of country where the two dialects shade into one another. Rudra and Bhimoo possessed the patel "watan" of Hirehgaon in equal shares, and consequently there was no small amount of jealousy between the two men—jealousy, it must be stated, fostered and prolonged by Bhimoo. Rudra was a very wealthy man, while Bhimoo retained his position in society chiefly by tyranny and intrigue; both had powerful friends at Court (*i.e.* the Collector's office). Rudra's were the more honest and trustworthy clerks, and the "sahib-logue," Bhimoo's, were (mostly) the understrappers in the office, including, however, no less a person than the "chitnis," whose influence for good or evil was, in many things, all powerful. Bhimoo, at the time of our story, was doing duty as Patel of the village, and he had, that day, impounded a stray buffalo of Rudra's, which had wandered into one of his (Bhimoo's) jowari fields. "*Hinc illae lachrymæ.*" Rudra was most indignant at the slight, as he looked upon it, put on him, while Bhimoo openly sneered at his rival's evident mortification. In

the course of the dispute, the ostensible *casus belli* was soon lost sight of, and grievances and disagreements of much longer standing and greater importance were discussed, thus giving rise to the violent tones and gestures which marked the conversation. Nearly all those present openly sided with Rudra, the number of those who favoured Bhimoo was very limited, and so it came to pass that after a time Bhimoo found himself out-clamoured, and to a certain extent silenced, but he was by no means convinced. As evening drew on, the conclave broke up, and the individuals composing it wended their ways to their several homes.

Rudra Gowda walked down the main street towards the gateway of the "wadars." He looked an imposing figure, tall and stately, a Mahratha of the Mahrathas, with a keen, well-cut face, rather heavy about the jaws, a large, snow-white moustache; his turban was a red one, jauntily set on the side of his head; in his hand he held a long bamboo staff, shod with iron, which served him as a walking-stick, and, the evening being chilly, he wore his "cumbli" tightly wrapped round him. Everyone he met salaamed to him respectfully, for the patel held a

position in the little village hierarchy somewhat analogous to that held by a squire in the old country some hundred years back ; he was, in fact, an Eastern Squire Western. Passing through the gate, he held on across the fields in a northerly direction, following a winding but well-used footpath. His house lay outside the village, some half-mile or so away, a tolerably large building, with three or four small huts in the immediate neighbourhood, occupied for the most part by labourers in his employ ; the whole collection of tenements was called "Gowda-wadi," or the headman's hamlet. Nearing the place, several dogs came out barking and yelping, nor were they satisfied even when they discovered who the intruder was, for they kept on yelling and baying at nothing in particular in a manner peculiar to the village dog. Hurling a violent imprecation or two at them, Rudra entered his house.

It is not yet daylight, not even the faintest sign of approaching day is to be detected, unless we except a slight touch of cold in the faint breeze, which is now springing up, after the hour of complete rest which Nature seems to indulge in between the days, as it

were—the time when, according to garrulous and superstitious old wives, the weary spirit most often leaves its earthly abode, and wings its way into pathless space ; yet voices are ringing out sharp and clear, that vague, plaintive, yet withal not unmusical chant which the women of India are wont to raise as they sit at the mill grinding the corn for the daily household consumption. Little by little other sounds and signs of life are forthcoming ; the rooks commence to challenge one another, a sleepy twitter or two is heard at intervals, the intervals gradually decreasing, till at length the grey clouds in the east begin to blush, the rascally old crows ever the last to go to bed, and the first to get up, wake all at once in a hurry, and immediately fall foul of one another, venting their spite in opprobrious caws. Then the world goes on again. The cows and she-buffaloes are lowing, asking to be relieved of their milky burthens. Ballia and Vitoba, Krishna, and Maruti, emerge from their respective nooks sleepily rubbing their eyes, yawning and stretching their arms. Gowda-wadi is awake, the old familiar round begins once more.

In the dim, gradually broadening light, you can

now make out the Patel's house : a square, massive erection built of big heavy stones clumsily and roughly tooled and held together by primitive but tenacious mortar ; it carries a tiled roof, and there is only one door seemingly in the whole structure ; this is placed in front of the house, and is a large, massive wooden door, studded with iron knobs ; windows there are none, but there are a few small, narrow, horizontal *slits*, to let in light and air, in the front and side walls ; the back wall is a dead blank. On either side of the door, and extending along the whole frontage, is a raised dais, or platform, composed of large stones. The door opens inwards, upon a large covered court under the roof of the house, which evidently serves as a common room ; several of the inmates of the house sleep here, a rude table and two or three stools are scattered about, while instruments of husbandry are to be seen everywhere, leaning against the walls, in the corners of the room, and lying about upon the floor. Floor covering there is none, but the stones composing the floor have been "leaped," that is, covered with a solution of cow-dung and water. On three sides of this centre court are situated rooms,

long and narrow, running the whole length and breadth of the building ; the two side rooms are used as sleeping-apartments, while the compartment at the back serves as a kind of store and tool-house. All these apartments are built of large slabs of quartzite, a stone met with in great abundance in the neighbourhood of Hirehgaon. The store-room is very massively built, the flooring and all four walls being made entirely of this stone. The rafters and beams in the building are black, and encrusted with soot, for there is no chimney, all the smoke therefore resulting from fires kindled in the edifice has to find its way out as best it can, through the interstices of the tiled roof. Outside the house, and a little to the right of the entrance door, is a large deep well, which is used for agricultural as well as for domestic purposes ; at the sides and back of the house are several outhouses or sheds used for stabling, and attached, for the most part, to the main building, while scattered about in the immediate vicinity are eight or ten stacks, chiefly of jowari, the stalks of the cereal forming excellent fodder for all sorts of cattle. Close by is a small cluster of huts used as dwelling places by the tenants

and labourers of Rudra Gowda. Stretching on beyond, there is a fine expanse of garden land watered from the aforesaid well, and abundantly stocked with plantain, guava, jambul, pomegranate, and trees. The whole is a right fair sight to look upon, the snug homstead of a snug, respectable farmer.

There is a rattle of bars and bolts; and groaning, creaking, complaining, the massive door, two leaved, swings open and two fine-looking young men are exposed to view; tall and shapely, with intelligent-faces, they seem to be between five and twenty and thirty years of age, and are clad in similar fashion, that is, with cumblies wrapped round them, and for head covering, spun cotton caps, very much resembling in shape those worn by brewers' draymen but white in colour. These were the two elder sons, of Rudra, and they were named respectively Luxumon and Maloo. Luxumon bore on his shoulder a two-bullock yoke and a bundle of thick rope, while Maloo carried a rude wooden harrow. Apparently Luxumon was bound for the well, while the younger brother was going further afield. Entering the house, we shall find the rest of the family party assembled; the men appear

all more or less sleepy, but the women are alert and lively enough. Rudra himself is seated on his bed, and does not yet seem to have awoke to the fact that he is thus sitting. Savitri Bai, his wife, is replenishing a nearly told-out fire with some "bratties." A keen-eyed active dame, though her hair is snow-white, her figure is as slight and willowy as that of any maiden of fifteen summers. A kindly, vigorous old lady is she, sharp of tongue, and a little uncertain of temper perhaps, a notable housekeeper, and a good wife and mother. The buxom, comely young woman at work at some culinary preparation, the chief, nay, the only ingredients in which seem to be flour ghee and a little water, is Moti, Savitri's eldest daughter-in-law, and her right hand in all matters domestic. A small, dark object, stark naked, is lying on the floor by her side, kicking, stretching, and cooing idiotically, as all babies, black, white, or brown are wont to do when satisfied with themselves and the world in general, and another youngster, also guiltless of any clothing, except a string of beads round his neck, and a slender silver anklet on one leg, is pulling at her "sari," and generally impeding her movements as much as possible. This

is Ganpat, Rudra's eldest grandson, the apple of the old man's eye, and the pride of his heart. The youngster is a thorough little scoundrel, wilful in the extreme, he has not a wish that is not gratified, and is likely to turn out a perfect pest to society. "My she-buffalo;" that is what old Rudra calls him, it means a great deal, let me tell you. The long, ungainly youth lying in a corner, with his head listlessly resting on his hand, is Tukaram, Rudra Gowda's third son; and close to him, squatting on his heels, is a bright lad of fifteen years or so, talking and laughing with a girl very much his own age, who, with a water-pot on her head, and another under her arm, and resting on her hips, is evidently going to fetch water from the well. The boy is Hari, the patel's fourth and youngest son, while the girl is Tukaram's wife, and rejoices in the name of Bhagirti. This was the household as constituted at the time we are speaking of. Maloo and Hari were both married men, but their wives were still in their own homes, and had not joined their husbands. Maloo's wife was his second wife, his first having died about a year previously, leaving no children. The males of the party presently departed to perform their

various daily tasks, Tukaram to the stables, Hari away to the village kuran, or common grazing-ground, to take stock of some outlying cattle left there during the night, the said cattle not being deemed valuable enough for places in the cowsheds, while old Rudra, seating Ganpat on his shoulder, sallied forth on a general round of inspection.

CHAPTER II.

THE BABUL KURAN.

BHIMOO PATEL'S house was in the village of Hirehgaon itself ; it was in the main street, and stood back a little from the other dwellings ; in point of size it was the largest building in Hirehgaon, but it did not somehow look so imposing or well-to-do as the house nearly opposite to it, the abode of the Guzar Goculdass. The village chowdi was close by ; in fact, Bhimoo's house was located in the fashionable part of Hirehgaon ; the outhouses and offices were placed behind, and beyond there was a row of dirty, mean-looking huts, the habitations of a small community of weavers. At earliest cock-crow that morning Bhimoo emerged from his home, and after looking cautiously round, proceeded up the main street ; passing the chowdi, where he was challenged by a watchful mahar, who felt sorry for himself when he discovered who the passer-by

was, for, as has been mentioned, the patel was feared rather than respected, he went on to the further or eastern gate, and seated himself quietly on a heap of fallen *débris*. He was joined presently by a small slight figure, wrapped up in a white sheet, which looked quite ghostly in the faint grey light; the wearer was a slenderly made, fair young man with sharply cut clever-looking face, his eyes were of a light colour, which contrasted curiously with his tawny skin, and gave him a restless, shifty look; he was a Shri Vaishnava (Vishnu) Brahmin,* as was indicated by the three marks (white, yellow, and white) on his forehead; he was the kulkarni, or village accountant of Hirehgaon; for the rest he was heartless, unscrupulous, and cunning in no ordinary degree.

The two men had evidently met by appointment, and with some common object in view, for with a muttered, "Ram, Ram, Gowdappa!" "Ram, Ram,

* The Shri (or Sri) Vaishnavas are worshippers of Vishnu, as identified with his consort, Luxmi or Sri. Their distinguishing mark is in the shape of a trident, being three vertical lines on the forehead meeting at the junction of the eyebrows, the two outside lines being white and the centre one yellow. The Sri Vaishnavas assert that Vishnu is Brahma, and that he was before all worlds, and was the cause and creator of all.

Swami!"* they broke into Indian file, and started off without further parley in a south-easterly direction, walking at a rapid pace, Bhimoo leading the way. After proceeding thus for half a mile or so, they struck the northern bank of the river Gunga, and pursued their way along its margin, still going eastwards. "Mother Gunga," as the river was called by the dwellers in its neighbourhood, was rushing along in a muddy, tumultuous stream with a sullen swishing sound which told of recent rain away in the hills, from whence she took her rise. Along the banks were low bushes and mangroves, and as the men passed on they started various birds and animals. Here a jackal meets Bhimoo face to face on the narrow path, and instantly dives into the brushwood; presently a couple of partridges scuttle across, while there are a bevy of button quail coming down to drink; the

* Hail! oh, patel (or head-man); hail! oh, holy (or reverend man). The kulkarni being a Brahmin, was also a priest, or of the priestly class, and therefore holy; there is a strong resemblance in many points between the Brahmin and the Levite of the Mosaic dispensation, so strong that it might be taken as a survival of the traditions of that ancient religious tribe, sect, or caste. "Ram, Ram," is an invocation of the deity, and is thus used in salutation.

harsh, discordant cry of pea-fowl is heard from an island in the river, and there several of the wary birds may be seen feeding in the fields which the path edges ; on seeing the intruders, they start off at a rapid run in the direction of the river brink, gaining which they take to flight one after another, flying low and awkwardly, but at a good pace, the ladies of the party, in quiet colours, leading, while the vainglorious male, with burnished throat and long, sweeping tail,* follows in their wake. After proceeding thus for nearly a couple of miles, the two men gain the outskirts of a fairly large grove of babul trees covering some eight or ten acres of ground.

Noble trees are some of these babuls, giants of their race ; a number of them are quite ten to twelve feet in girth ; growing in the deep black rich soil close to the river, they had increased and flourished apace. Trees in all stages of growth are to be found, from the tiny, seedling barely six inches high to the hoary veterans aforesaid. Pressing on to the inner

* The common peacock (*Pavo cristatus*) usually moults during the rains in Southern India ; still I have it, on the authority of Jerdon, that it sheds its train very irregularly, so it is hoped that the poetical license (if any) taken will be excused.

portion of the grove, or kuran, as it is technically termed, the canopy of the trees overhead was so dense as to cause a dimness in the light, although the sun was well up by this time—a dimness imparting a sort of weird, uncanny feeling. This feeling was heightened presently, for, on reaching the centre of the kuran, its *sanctum sanctorum*, as it were, one came on a bare place encircled by some dozen or so of the largest trees; a spot destitute of grass, a condition resultant on the heavy canopying shade, and in the middle of this was an enormous trap boulder smeared over with red lead, and looking somehow indescribably hideous and repulsive. This was the outward and visible sign of the goddess Durga; the blood-drinker, the cholera queen, the taker of life! On the branches of the babul trees nearest to her are strips of cloth, mostly women's offerings, as they appear to be chiefly of the texture and colour of the saris worn by women. In front of the stone are two or three small, rude, wooden toy carts—at least that is what they look like—containing each a wooden doll, nothing less, indeed, than effigies of the dread goddess which have been thus carted here during

the last outbreak of the cholera plague, in the hope of stopping it, by giving her goddessship the very broadest of hints that her presence is superfluous, and that it will be much better for her to stay at home, here in her own babul kuran.

The Hirehgaon babul kuran was a forest reserve, it had been solemnly declared a forest according to statute and law during the satrapy of Sir Plancus Church—that ever-green pro-consul indicating his vitality in a specially forcible and appropriate manner by the attention he paid to forests and matters forestal. Many obscure, unknown plots of land had emerged from their obscurity during his time, and their tutelary deities (if they had any) must have blushed to have found their haunts blazoned abroad in the *Quack*, *Quack* Government Gazette, as proposed, &c., reserved, &c., forest under sec. x. of the Forest Act. I am sure, though, that old Durga Dèvi would not have blushed even had it come to her ears; she was long past anything of that sort, the brazen, wicked, cruel old hag! When Munro (the Divisional Forest Officer) first came to Lolapur, that is about a year before the opening of this story, he soon ascertained that about

the best small-game shooting in the district was to be found in the neighbourhood of Hirehgaon, so he determined to inspect the forests in the vicinity of the village as early as possible ; in vain did Ballaji Wasdeo, the Forest Inspector of the Taluta, tell him that it was no use going all that way just to inspect the Hirehgaon kuran, for did not Durga Dèvi reside there? and who was there so bold as to touch a twig of any tree that was supposed to enjoy her awful protection? Munro was certain that kuran required a close and careful survey. Alas! alas! for poor Ballaji Rao, it was a sad day for him, when he, in company with his chief, first trod those sacred précincts! Unauthorised cuttings on every side; huge branches lopped off the goddess-defended trees! Ah! Ballaji! Ah! Ballaji Rao! put not thy trust any more in gods and goddesses as efficient substitutes for forest guards and thine own eyes. Ballaji Rao was degraded one step, and sent off to far-away Kursitbad a sadder and a wiser man, with a much lessened feeling of respect for Durga Dèvi and her sort. Truly the schoolmaster *is* abroad, and no mistake about it!

When Bhimoo Gowda and Nanayen Kulkarni reached the shrine of Durga, they found seated there a man apparently wrapped in a brown study, for he took no notice of their approach till they were near enough to him to almost touch him when he sprang at once to his feet and saluted them in a graceful but at the same time, off-hand and independent manner. Their greeting, on the other hand, was rather that of inferiors to a superior. The stranger is a man worth noting; he is no other than Nagoji Naik, the Bèder the daring outlaw, the much-talked-of dacoit chief. What would not Mr. Anderson, the Police Superintendent of Lolapur, give to be as near to him as are friends Bhimoo and Nanayen now? for the Bèder Naik has been a sore thorn in the superintendent's side for a long time past. Secure in the independent State of Jaffirabad, he makes raids from thence into the adjoining country, not even respecting British soil, and supported, encouraged by, indeed, secretly in league with many in British territory, he has up till now successfully evaded all attempts to capture him. Evidently, from the manner of the three men now associated, they

have met before. Without further preliminaries, all seat themselves, and commence an earnest conversation carried on in low, rapid tones.

Let us look at Nagoji Naik, that celebrated Oriental Robin Hood and Jack Sheppard rolled into one. He is about five feet eight inches in height, which is tall for a native, but his immense chest and massive bull neck take away from him the appearance of good stature, while, at the same time, they are indicative of great personal strength. On his head he wears a coloured cotton handkerchief of the pattern known as Madras, and he is clad as to his body in a blue check blouse and a pair of dirty white cotton drawers or breeches, fitting closely to the calf of the leg; in his hand is a short, thick stick, weighted at one end with lead, and his cumbli is lying folded upon the ground at his feet. The face is a remarkable one: low, wide forehead, sparkling, intelligent eyes and thin lips, indicative equally of cruelty and determination; in complexion he is very dark, the face thickly pitted with small-pox, and destitute of hair; in fact, he looks what he is, a combination of brain and muscle, a born leader of men. By the cruel custom of his

caste, his mother, being the third daughter of her parents, was devoted to Yelama,* in other words, to a prostitute's life, so Nagoji did not know who his father was, but called himself "The son of the sea." Who knows that this did not affect the man's life? Proud, possessed of no ordinary, though, in the nature of things, undeveloped talents, gifted with great bodily strength, is it to be wondered at that this man turned to rend the world to which he owed so little? To wring from it, if not affection and respect, then dread and subservience. Men of his stamp, even without the cruel goad that spurred him on, are sure to make their mark, and the nature of that mark is largely

* Yelama is the goddess to whom the Bèders are most devoted; she has many shrines scattered about the country, perhaps the principal one is at Savadatti, in the Relgamn Collectorate. The third daughter of every Bèder is vowed to this goddess, and is sent to her temple when about ten years of age; they are attached to the temple service for a time, and then drift away into the villages, where they lead the lives of prostitutes. The system is, in fact, no more nor less than prostitution sanctioned by religion. The sad answer, "Son of the sea," must be familiar to those who took part in the preliminary operations of the famine census in Mysore of the 1st January, 1879. The reply came mostly from the lips of Bèders and Hòlers. Truly a pitiable state of affairs to exist in civilised India in the last quarter of the nineteenth century!

determined by the surrounding circumstances of their lives. Sivaji, the great Mahratha leader, was but a prototype of Nagoji, on a larger, grander scale, because more aided and abetted by the character and conditions of the times in which he flourished.

The errand on which Bhimoo and Narrayen had stolen away on this morning in September, was connected with Rudra Patel. Both Bhimoo and Narrayen had long been the agents and tools of the Bèder chief, and had supplied him on several important occasions with valuable information. Bhimoo and the kul-karni both hated and dreaded Rudra Gowda, and Nagoji also entertained a deep grudge against him : for the honest, upright old Mahratha would have nought to do with him, nor would aid him in his nefarious adventures. Most certainly, on the other hand, the old patel would have denounced him and helped in effecting his capture, could he have done so. Nagoji, therefore, had lent a willing ear to overtures from the rascals now in conference with him, touching a raid on old Rudra's house, and it was to settle details with regard to this business that the present meeting had been planned. Rudra's ruin would be useful to

Bhimoo, for it would give him the upper hand in the village. It would be sweet to Narrayen Rao, for it would gratify his spite against the worthy old man who scorned and contemned him, knowing, as he did, many of his underhand dealings and petty tricks in cheating the poor ignorant ryots who formed, perforce, his *clientèle*. The plot was finally settled, the parts each was to play were assigned, and the day fixed for the attempt. Nagoji would cross the river the night of the new moon (that is about a week from the day we are chronicling) with his men, and would attack the house as soon as sleep had descended on its inmates, while Bhimoo and Narrayen Rao were to remain in the village and quiet as far as possible the apprehensions of the villagers, should any scuffle occur or outcry arise. The wadars encamped on the outskirts of the village were to be sounded, and if they appeared willing to join in the enterprise, and it seemed safe and feasible to allow them to do so, their services were to be enlisted. This delicate task was entrusted to the astute and wily Brahmin, and he undertook it eagerly, confidently. The three men then rose and prepared to go their various ways. A

low whistle was given by Nagoji, which received a prompt response from the river close by, and presently a small leather circular boat, or coracle, emerged from some mangrove bushes growing on the river brink, in which a youth of say twenty years of age was seated. This was Nagoji's brother, the only relation the Naik possessed in the world, and he loved him with all the strength of his deep, powerful nature. Stepping into the boat, the two men shoved off, and presently gained the opposite shore. Bhimoo and Narayen watched them disappear, and then, without speaking a word, turned and went away separately and swiftly. They regained the village independently, and apparently as if coming from different starting-places. Needless to say that no one would have guessed that they had been spending the early morning in Durga Dèvi's babul kuran.

The hour of noon is past, the toilers in the fields have finished their mid-day meal, have enjoyed their well-earned siesta, and are returning reinvigorated to their individual tasks. At Kudra Gowda's house there are signs of unusual excitement and activity ; here, at all events, something has occurred, or is about

to occur, which has stirred even the bovine apathy of the daily labourers. A knot of men, women, and children are congregated in front of the door, while two steeds are being led up and down by dusky, grooms four-fifths unclad. The larger animal is a fearful and wonderful creature : a piebald, with sweeping tail and mane, the ends of which have been duly tinged with "pattang," one optic "in a fine frenzy rolling," the other a pure, unadulterated wall-eye, a pinkish-white nose, and very high-stepping action (plenty of knee about it) complete the picture. The other is a very diminutive grey country "tat," cow-hocked the eyes filled with salt rheum. The horse is invested in trappings intended to strike the beholder with admiration and awe : a deep, roomy, curved saddle, with high pommel and crupper, reins of broad red cloth with bells attached, a martingale of twisted red and white cotton rope ; the stirrups are large and ample, and are attached to the saddle by cotton rope also, and the bit, not seen, but oh, such an instrument of torture ! heavy, and almost as sharp as a knife. The pony is much less gorgeously caparisoned, rope does duty for reins, the saddle is of the same pattern

as the other, but showing many signs of wear and tear, and there are no bells, that finishing touch to the piebald's glory being wanting. Presently Rudra and his youngest son Hari emerge from the house surrounded by the rest of the family ; the inevitable cumbli is folded and placed carefully on the piebald's saddle, so that the "gudeman" may ride soft and easy, old Rudra is hoisted up and placed carefully on it, Hari scrambles on to the grey's back, and away they go at a quick amble, amid a shower of "Ram, Ram's," the women cracking their knuckles industriously, and young Ganpat howling and lamenting at the fullest pitch of his lungs at having been done out of his usual ride on the big horse in front of his grandfather. Rudra and his son are bound for Lolapur itself, the metropolis of the district. Rudra, like most of his class, is highly enamoured of the law, and is almost always involved in some suit usually connected with a question concerning land. His opponent just now is the village "sowcar," or money-lender, and somehow the Gowda finds that the matter in hand is not running quite so easily as usual, while the rupees are running away much more easily

than usual, so he has determined to go to Lolapur, there to engage the services of Mr. Venayek Raghonath Joshi himself, the leviathan of the local bar. He is taking his Benjamin, Hari, with him, as the boy has as yet seen nothing of the world outside the limits of his village, and the sights of Lolapur, and the "ghora-logue" there, will in themselves be an education to him. Hirehgaon is about seventy miles distant from Lolapur; the old man calculates that his absence from home will extend to some eight or ten days.

CHAPTER III.

LOLAPUR.

“AN ordinary Indian station enough, and yet what a pretty one !” This was the unuttered exclamation that sprang to the lips of young Duckworth, the Assistant-Superintendent of Police, as riding to the mouth of the “khind” on the Dholpur road, he came suddenly on the little place lying stretched at his feet. There are not many pretty stations in India, and when a man does come across one, he appreciates it. Duckworth had not been long at Lolapur ; in fact, he had but recently arrived in the country, and so he had never seen the little beauty before with her best morning frock on, all smiling and dimpling as she lay bathed in the glory of the rising sun, which was driving away the mist from the hilltops in rolling clouds and hastening to greet Lolapur once more. It was one of the cool, bright mornings towards the

end of September. They occasionally come to brace a man up for the muggy month of October which is coming, and to give him a foretaste of the cold weather for which we shall all be panting long before our time of trial shall have passed away. And what did Duckworth see? Lolapur was at his feet, the nearest house was not much more than a hundred yards away from where he sat on his horse, spellbound as it were. Lolapur is situated in a kind of amphitheatre of hills of a moderate height which encloses the place on the east, south, and west, while to the north there is a large cultivated plain bounded on the extreme horizon by a lofty chain of hills. The station lies in the south-west corner of this amphitheatre, and gradually slopes upwards from the plain till it almost reaches as high as the khind, or saddle, where Duckworth had pulled up. Full in front of him, towering over the less pretentious dwellings which lie about it, was the Residency with the Union Jack lazily flapping against the flagstaff stirred by the light morning airs. Beyond were the barracks of the detachment of European infantry, also imposing-looking buildings, but dwarfed into comparative

insignificance by their grand-looking neighbour. On this side of the Residency, almost, in fact, from the spot where Duckworth was, and gradually sinking down to the plain, were the bungalows of most of the civilian community snugly nestling down among the trees. Between and above the foliage glimpses of white walls and red roofs might here and there be seen, and here and there a window would be awakened up by a messenger from the god of day in the shape of a ray, and would instantly twinkle all over in return for the civility, promptly going to sleep again when the messenger moved on—the whole operation on the part of the window being for all the world like a broad wink. To the east of these bungalows, and to the north of the Residency, there stretched, a plain, or “maidan,” half-a-mile broad, and on the other side of this plain there were two rows of thatched bungalows occupied for the most part by the officers of the native regiment and of the European detachment. Beyond these were the native infantry lines, and to the north of these, again, was the Sudder Bazaar, from which the inhabitants of Lolapur drew their daily supplies. Away to the east, and stretching right up

to the foot of the hills which formed the eastern wall of the amphitheatre, was a rolling sea of grass. The earth was clad in green of different hues, from the yellowish-green of the grass, through the varying shades of the sugar-cane and jowari, up to the vivid emerald-green of the young rice not yet come into ear which was growing in the fields to the north of Lolapur in the great plain which stretches out in that direction. "All the trees on all the hills (had) opened their thousand leaves," the giant hills in the distance loomed dark, dark blue, and here on the tops of the hills close at hand the mist was being cruelly knocked about by old Sol. It was constantly changing into fantastic shapes and colours, now white, now grey, now blue, now running for dear life along the tree-clad summits, now acknowledging a superior power, and sullenly rising straight up into the air till it finally disappeared to join the clouds where its proper place was. And the sky was deep, deep blue, flecked with small fleecy clouds merrily racing along to see who would be the first to absorb the deserters into its ranks, while in the distance, traversing the northern plain, flashed and sparkled the river Tulsi.

Then Duckworth could see right in front of him the Europeans manœuvring on their drill-ground, and not far from them, the native regiment on their parade, while to his left, on the race-course—round which he had already given his horse a breather—the police sowars were undergoing their matutinal tuition. Nor was the ear neglected, for, borne upon the breeze, came various excruciating blasts and yells as those of spirits in torments, emanating from sundry restive bugles and other instruments of *music!*—save the mark—lustily blown by would-be bandsmen. Now and then the “caw” of a crow or the low “coo” of a dove would come in. Duckworth did not think that the “caw” of a crow was specially soothing, but certainly in the early morning, when one’s soul is attuned to enjoyment, it does not provoke the anathema it is likely to call forth later in the day; anyway, even the “caw” of a crow is much more a thing of joy than the confused mingling of diabolical sounds extracted from cornets, bugles, “*et hoc genus omnes*” at the hands, or rather the mouths, of a dozen or so of raw recruits.

And so, Duckworth having looked his fill, put

spurs to his horse, and cantered briskly down the road to the Residency, which was his destination for the present. The road to the Residency, or rather the last two hundred yards, were lined with hedges of heliotrope and wild rose, exceedingly beautiful. Turning in at the gate, he overtook a gentleman who was evidently bound for the same place that he was : this was Mr. Fellowes, the district judge. He sat firm and square on his horse : a dark-complexioned man with face much bronzed from constant exposure to the Indian sun. A rugged, well-nigh harsh, face ; but this impression died away almost instantly when you had caught sight of those honest, kind, brown eyes, which fittingly reflected the soul within that lighted up those windows. For Fellowes was a firm, strong, righteous man, with as kind a heart as ever beat within a human bosom. All children took to him instinctively, and there can scarcely be any better criterion of kindness and tenderness than that. He was a man of deeds not words ; in figure about the middle height, spare—nay, lean—he still had that width of shoulder and depth of chest which tell of uncommon physical strength. Without an ounce of superfluous

flesh, he was all muscle and whipcord, capable of the utmost fatigue human endurance can bear—for Fellowes was always in training. He was enthusiastically fond of "shikar" in any shape or form, and many a striped monarch of the jungle, and many a mighty bison, had fallen to his rifle. Conscientious and hard-working, his kindness to the natives inspired them with admiration and affection, while his firmness, aye, and severity, when called for, kept the unruly in dread of him. When he came to Lolapur, the people of the district he was leaving felt it as a public calamity ; in fine, he was a man to be respected by all ; feared, perhaps, by the many, but loved by the few to whom he extended the honour of his friendship. Not a popular man by any means, but none the worse for that.

Exchanging friendly greetings, the two horsemen rode up to the front door of the Residency, and, dismounting, entered the verandah. The judge and the collector had arranged to go out that morning to try and get some florican, which had been seen a little distance from the station in a kuran that the latter wot of. The collector had almost finished his chota-

hazri, and booted and spurred and equipped for the fray, was leaning back in an easy-chair, smoking his morning cheroot and reading the paper. A short, stout, choleric man, red in the face, red hair, red beard, red everything, the red getting tinged with grey here and there. A man of indomitable spirit and untiring energy, he not only drove himself but everybody (if he could) whom he came in contact with. Really a very kind man, his short, abrupt ways and apparent want of consideration for others made him to a certain extent disliked. He and Fellowes were very good friends; one thing, he could not drive Fellowes, for that imperturbable individual went his own way and his own pace, in spite of all the angry fussing of the little locomotive associated with him. The collector had found this out, and had given him up as a bad job; besides, both men were good sportsmen and good shots; in fact, the collector was considered to be one of the best, if not *the* best, small-game shot in the Presidency. His name was Musprat.

“Good morning, Fellowes! Have a cup of tea?”

“No, thanks; I’ve had my chota-hazri; and,

besides, we ought to be well on our way by this time."

"Of course we ought," snapped Musprat, getting almost purple in his wrath ; "I've been waiting for you this last half-hour !" And he furtively swallowed the last half of his cup of tea.

"So sorry !"

And they mounted their horses, and away they went. Let us hope they got some sport.

Young Duckworth was left standing in the verandah—a bright English lad, tall, slim, and active, and with the English roses still lingering in his cheeks, for he had not been out in India long. He watched his two seniors depart, and then turned and entered the house, emerging again shortly in his uniform, of which, boy-like, he was very proud, and then once more mounting his horse, he in turn disappeared ; evidently he was bound on some errand of duty. Duckworth lived with Mr. Musprat. His (Duckworth's) father had been in the Civil Service, and when Mr. Musprat first came out to the country Mr. Duckworth had been a very good friend to him. The really warm-hearted little man was now paying off part of the

debt by, in his turn, looking after his friend's son. As he was of a very different kidney to Fellowes, and, withal, very young, he was a splendid subject for the Collector to drive, and the Collector did drive him !

CHAPTER IV.

AN ANGLO-INDIAN HOME.

A HOME in the fullest sense of the word on the face of it; a low-browed, wide-verandahed house, with the warm, comfortable-looking red tiles and spotless whitewashed walls imparting a sense of comfort. The pretty garden was carefully tended and well watered, with wealth of roses, some in pots, some trained over archways made of bamboo, and the variegated mass of colour produced by different annuals in full bloom planted out in the beds. All, in fact, combined to give one the impression—I cannot think of a better description—as you were nearing Bob Anderson's house, that somehow or other there was a woman there, and a charming woman to boot. All doubts as to the presence of femininity in the house were at once dispelled when you crossed the threshold, for, right in front of you, there was a cane work-table, with

a low chair beside it, and on it an overflowing work-basket gaping so as to show needles, pins, tapes, &c., and by the side of it a pair of knitting-needles which pierced, as the eye of the initiated could tell, the unfinished fragment of a baby's sock. Easy-chairs, tables, &c., were scattered about with tasteful "abandon," and an antimacassar or two showed the refining effect of a lady's touch. In one of these chairs, in the self-same attitude in which we surprised the Collector this morning, and engaged in the same manner, was Bob Anderson, the Police Superintendent of the Lolapur district. A regular Saxon, with bright blue eyes, and fair hair, and beard sweeping over his chest; a tall, loosely made man, with big limbs and large, sinewy, hairy hands, wide of chest and big of shoulder, a model of manly beauty, save that, perhaps, he was a little too stout; but when a man is verging on the forties, and has led a happy, contented life, he may be pardoned if he has to enlarge his waistcoat a little. Altogether, he was the kind of man you would rather apologise to than fight with; but he was good-natured and genial to a degree, though, at times, a little hasty; a general

favourite with all, as was testified to by the universal use of his Christian name. "Bob Anderson" he was to every one—"dear old Bob" to a great many. Bob greatly enjoyed this half-hour when, having finished his morning's work, and had his tub, he settled himself down to the undisturbed enjoyment of his cheroot and newspaper. From some interior room in the house shrill cries of anger and impatience were every now and then audible, from which it might be conjectured that Bob had a family, and, further, it seemed probable that they were undergoing the necessary—but usually to childish ideas hateful—performance yclept "morning stables," or, to speak more plainly, that they were being bathed. If one could have seen behind the scenes, one would have discovered that the conjectures were true ones, and that Mrs. Anderson, in person, was superintending the rite. To return to Bob, the tumult had no effect on him, for he was well used to it ; but, still, he was not destined to enjoy his newspaper in peace that morning, at all events, for the sound of a horse's hoofs, advancing at a rapid trot down the compound, gave warning of an interruption, and with an impatient "pish," he put

down the paper, and went to meet his visitor. He knew pretty well who it would be, it was young Duckworth, his assistant.

"Come in, young 'un," said Bob, cordially, for he liked the boy well. "What is in the wind now?"

"Thanks ; I will," said Duckworth, as, jumping off his horse and giving him over to his "ghorawalla," who came up panting at this moment, he walked up the steps of the verandah. The boy was full of zeal, but inexperienced, for he had not been out long, so he was always coming to Bob about his work, and he could not well have had a better mentor. The matter on hand this morning was some dereliction of duty on the part of a "jemadar" in the City Police Force, and we need not follow the consultation. Business over, Duckworth rose to go, but Bob would not hear of it.

"No, no ; we are just going to have breakfast ; you must stop and have some. Here, ghorawalla ! Take the sahib's horse to the stables."

Duckworth consented, nothing loth, for, in common with most of the other young fellows in the station, he was not only very fond of Bob, but was also

deeply in love with Mrs. Anderson, worshipping her with the distant homage paid by "the Indian to a star." Mrs. Anderson made her appearance shortly, and on seeing her, one could quite understand Duckworth's infatuation. A tall, fair woman with a gracious, tender face, true and pure in its expression, with large, deep blue eyes and masses of yellow hair; not exactly a pretty woman, but a lovable woman, a woman to be trusted in, a woman whose face told of deep kindness and infinite charity, a woman whose mere presence could not but be an unspeakable comfort to all who were weak, ill, and suffering. She was dressed in spotless white, with a simple gold brooch at her throat, and a plain gold bracelet on one arm. Clinging to her skirts were two children, a boy and a girl, who, hearing their father speaking to some strange gentleman, pretended to be overcome with shyness; shyness, however, which was soon dissipated, for on seeing who the stranger was, they rushed to welcome him with joyous shouts, since Duckworth was a prime favourite with them. He would romp with them at any time—cunning youngster, of course Mrs. Anderson liked him—and still having some of his

mother's milk in him, I believe he enjoyed the games as much as the children did !

"Mary," said Bob, "Mr. Duckworth is going to stay to breakfast."

"Good morning, Mr. Duckworth. I am so glad that you are staying, you have not been in now for a good long time."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Anderson, I really did not intend coming down on you like this ; but Bob there, would not let me go." Even this youngster had the audacity to call him Bob, not only to his own, but even to his wife's face !—a far higher pitch of daring, let me tell you ; but Mrs. Anderson was used to it, and did not notice it.

"Bob, dear, I am sure Mr. Duckworth would like to wash his hands."

"Oh yes, of course. Come along, young 'un."

The artful young woman having thus got rid of the enemy for the time being, charged headlong into the dining-room, and held a hurried council of war with the butler as to ways and means. Bob was noted for the way he could get outside what the Americans call "a square meal," and Duckworth was

not much behind his chief in that line; so Mrs. Anderson's precautions are not to be wondered at. When her troubles reappeared—they had been accompanied by the children, who now returned with them—she was sitting in that very chair we noticed when we first entered the house, knitting away at that baby's sock as if "not enough for breakfast" was the very last thing that could have entered her head.

As soon as breakfast was over, Duckworth jumped up, and said he must be off, and in spite of all remonstrance, he ordered his horse and rode away. He knew that Mr. Musprat hated unpunctuality at meal-times, and if it had come to his knowledge that such unpunctuality was caused by partaking of a meal at another person's house, in a manner surreptitiously, his wrath would have known no bounds. This was very present in young Duckworth's mind when he accepted Bob's invitation to breakfast, being impelled to do it by his adoration of Mrs. Anderson and also by his knowledge of the florican expedition which he trusted might detain his host till a later hour than usual. Nevertheless, he rode home in a rather per-

turbed state of mind ; could he get in before Mr. Musprat, he would be all right, a second breakfast made no odds to him ! He would not for worlds that anyone should have divined his thoughts, but Mrs. Anderson, like a true woman, had detected them at once. As soon as the young fellow was out of ear-shot, she said—

“Do you know, Bob, I think Mr. Musprat keeps too tight a hand on that boy.”

“Oh, bother !” growled Bob. “It will do him all the good in the world, youngsters want a tight hand over them ; pity they so seldom get it nowadays.”

They went together into the drawing-room, and there Mrs. Anderson turned upon her husband.

“Bob, you are a bad boy, how often have I told you not to ask people at the very last minute ; and Mr. Duckworth too ! He eats nearly as much as you do, and there were only mutton-chops and curry and rice for breakfast.”

“Oh yes, dear, I *am* so sorry !” says penitent Bob. “I always forget, but I will try and remember another time ; we had a capital breakfast though, you managed uncommonly well.”

"Yes, sir ; but do you know it was what you call a scratch breakfast, and I don't like scratch breakfasts. I had to have a tin of sausages opened, and to order bacon and eggs."

"All right, old lady, I'll tell you what we'll do ; I'll get a slate and hang it up on the wall, and you shall put 'Yes' or 'No' on it, so that I may know whether I am to ask or not ; only, hang it all, I know I shall never look till I *have* asked !"

And then they had a merry laugh to themselves, and kissed and made it up. Not much of a quarrel !

Next they had family prayers which young Bob and little Mary attended ; and afterwards old Bob strolled out into the verandah to smoke his cheroot and to have it out with that newspaper. Not so fast, my boy, disappointment is still in store for thee !

Patter, patter comes the rush of the little feet, and Bob and Mary come tumbling in breathless with excitement : "Oh, mamma ! a 'borah' has come !" and they execute a war-dance indicative of ecstatic enjoyment.

"Oh, hang the 'borah,'" says the justly incensed Bob ; "tell him to go, we don't want anything."

“Oh, Bob, dear,” interposes Mrs. Anderson, “I want some tapes and buttons badly, and the machine-cotton is nearly finished ; I must get some flannel for baby’s petticoats, they are getting quite worn out ; and you know how very difficult it is to get things in Lolapur.”

“Very well, darling, have him in, by all means,” and Bob commences to slink off and have it out with that newspaper in some more secluded spot, but his hopes are vain.

“Oh, don’t go away, dear ; please stop and help me. You are such a good hand at bargaining.”

Now, Bob could bargain just about as well as he could play the fiddle—as he did not know a note of music, we need say no more ! Poor Bob sank back into his chair with an audible groan, but it did not make the slightest impression on that hard-hearted wife of his.

The borah was soon seated in the verandah, and busy opening his bundles and boxes—an operation much impeded by sudden raids on his goods on the part of the children. Both the ayahs, the butler, the hamal, the massal, and three or four sepoy, had con-

gregated in the background, and were looking on with the deepest interest.

Having disposed his goods to the best advantage, as he thought, the borah commenced by trying his blandishments on Bob. Poor fellow, he little thought of the risk he was running.

"Nice hats got, sar; nice socks. Master want banians?"

"No; don't want anything."

"Nice cloth got it; very nice gentlemen's suits, sar."

"No; I tell you I don't want anything."

"Nice shirts, sar," holding up an atrocious garment of a dice pattern in red, yellow, and purple.

"Confound it!" roared Bob, "I tell you I don't want anything! I'll kick you and your boxes out of the compound in another minute, if you bother me any more," and he sprang up from his chair, and began pacing rapidly up and down to calm himself. Ayahs, butlers, &c., are by this time not in sight.

The borah sees he has ventured far enough, and so does Mrs. Anderson, who, I verily believe, was secretly amused at the scene, though now slightly

alarmed at the *dénouement*. Casting a deprecating little look at her husband, she said—

“Borah, have you got any tape?”

“Yes, mem-sahib, plenty tape ; got all sorts tape.”

“Missus see this cosey?” producing a very handsome one, embroidered with gold thread.

“No, no,” hastily interposed Mrs. Anderson, afraid of another outburst ; “I want some tape.”

“Yes, mem-sahib, plenty very pretty cushions, Sind work.”

“No, no,” said Mrs. Anderson, getting a little impatient in *her* turn ; yet, in spite of herself, mollified at the sight of the pretty things ; “what I want is some tape.”

“Yes, mem-sahib, very pretty Rampur chaddars, mem-sahib,” suiting the action to the word, and spreading out two or three before her.

Bob had by this time quieted down sufficiently to allow of his reseating himself, and he marked down a very handsome white chaddar, or shawl, to offer as an atonement for his peevishness. The borah noted his glance, guileless people, these same borahs ! The ayahs, the butler, &c., again showed themselves in

the background. Mrs. Anderson made her purchases, bought her tapes, buttons, flannels, &c., and fixed her prices without consulting in the very least that husband of hers so good at making bargains. The borah packed up his things slowly one by one. Strange to say, it happened that the last thing which came to hand was the very pretty white Rampur chaddar that had attracted Bob. A very curious coincidence indeed. Slowly and carefully it is folded up.

“I say, borah, what is the price of that shawl?”

“This shawl, sar; this very nice shawl, sar. Rampua chaddar, sar; him price forty rupees.”

“Forty rupees! forty blazes! I’ll give you twenty-five.”

“No can give, sar. I give thirty-eight rupees, sar, true, sar; only two rupees profit; poor borah!”

“Very well then, take it away,” and Bob pretends to be reading that newspaper, though really watching the borah. The shawl is put away, and all the other boxes and bundles are tied up, but just as the one containing the shawl is about to share the same fate, the borah, as if struck by a sudden thought says—

"Must make trade, sar; take it, sar; thirty-five rupees, sar," and he lays the shawl at Bob's feet.

"Now, look here, I'll give you thirty for it, not an anna more."

"Very well, sar, poor man, sar, must make trade. Missus not telling other mem-sahibs. Poor borah, mem-sahib!"

The borah is paid and marches out of the compound under the ægis of Bob's presence, for he calculates, cunning man, that that repentant individual is only waiting to see his back to invest his wife in her new shawl; and so he marches off triumphant, and the ayahs, the butler, and the rest lose their dustoor, which, after the purchase of the shawl, they had expected would be four annas each at least, and their hearts wax heavy within them.

The borah was right; no sooner had he vanished into space than Bob threw the shawl over his wife's shoulders, and gave her a hearty kiss, which was warmly reciprocated.

"Oh, Bob, you old goose! you could easily have got it for twenty-five rupees. I believe you could have got it for twenty. You can't bargain any

better than baby can!" (Take good notice, gentlemen, of the words she had used only a little while before.) "But you are a dear good old hubby, the shawl is a very pretty one, and I thank you for it very much," and she drops him a little curtsey.

"Well, ta-ta, little one; I must be off to the office, it is getting late."

"And you have not seen baby since the early morning, and he has got his new tooth to show you too! Wait a minute, and I'll bring him to you, he must be awake by this time."

Presently she returns with the youngster, a happy, joyous mother, one of the most eloquent sights on God's earth. The tooth is looked for, but of course Bob cannot see it, so he is persuaded to put his little finger into Charley's mouth to feel it, and he does feel it with a vengeance, the small gentleman being only too delighted to have such a splendid substance to bite at. Then a game with Charlie up in the air and down to the ground, while he gets his fingers into his father's beard, and tugs thereat till the tears stand in the patriarch's eyes. Having under-

gone all this, Bob thinks that he has done his duty manfully, and departs, with a well-satisfied air, to his office ; his wife notices with amusement that he takes that paper with him.

Bob gone, Mrs Anderson sets about her household duties ; the butler is interviewed, and accounts taken ; then she gets her two elder children together after some time spent in the effort, and begins reading to them ; after about ten minutes of this, a yell from the baby requires her presence in the verandah, whither he has been taken by the ayah, and the interruption is at once taken advantage of by little Bob and Mary, who immediately disappear, and are seen no more. Mrs. Anderson is perfectly convinced that she reads to the children for at least half an hour every day, but I think that ten minutes would be much nearer the mark. After a little fun with baby, work and letters take up some time, when the children have to be put to bed for their midday sleep. On this particular day the "dhobie" has to be interviewed and his accounts taken ; a solemn proceeding, for washing-day is always an important day wherever the foot of the Englishwoman treadeth. Then a read

and a lie-down for a while, till half-past four, when it is time for tea, for which meal Bob turns up punctually ; and finally the "tonga " is ordered, the children are started off for their evening walk, and Mr. and Mrs. Anderson drive off to the "Gymkhana."

CHAPTER V.

THE HIREHGAON DACOITY.

LIFE in Hirehgaon went on in very much the usual hum-drum manner after the departure of Rudra Gowda and his youngest son. Of course at Gowda-Wadi itself the absence of the old man was very noticeable, and the bright, cheery ways of Hari were much missed, especially by his sister-in-law and prime favourite Bhagirti ; as for young Ganpat, his grandfather might never have existed, so completely did he give himself up to the fleeting pastimes and engrossing duties of the hour. There were slight signs of a divided household, Savitri Bhai exercised her regency rather rigorously ; Luxumon, Maloo, and Moti got on fairly well with the old lady. Tukaram and his wife not so smoothly ; the house-mistress was rather hard on the girl, thinking her lazy and flighty, and, sooth to say, the damsel was rather fond of fun.

In the village, the stately figure of the gowda was to a certain extent "wanted" at the evening gathering at the chowdi, but only to a certain extent. "The patel was coming back soon," so his cronies said. Taking advantage of his absence, Bhimoo and Narrayan were busily at work advancing their schemes for his harm. Narrayan Rao had sounded the wadars, through their naik, or head-man, Rama; he had found his task a very easy one, the men were ripe for any villainy, and knew the tortuous paths of crime well; also, being strangers to the place, they had no sentiment of regard for Rudra Gowda or his people, and were perfectly willing, nay, eager, to enrich themselves at his expense. Bhimoo, also, had not been idle, several of the looser characters in Hirehgaon were perfectly ready to join in any enterprise of the nature in hand, provided, always, that by so doing, they entailed no danger on themselves. The Bhimoo was profuse in his assurances on this head; "Was not Nagoji Naik himself coming? Who would suspect them? Was he (Bhimoo) such a fool as to have anything to do with such a business, unless he was sure of his ground? No, no; Nagoji and his

men would have the blame of it all ; while you and I (the tempter and the tempted) will enjoy a good share of the spoils." Emissaries had frequently passed between the naik and the conspirators in the village, everything had been arranged, every plan laid, and now the day for the attempt had arrived, the new moon would appear that night. There was a curious, restless kind of undefined, uneasy feeling abroad, brought about, really, by the manner of those in the plot, though, of course, they were not aware of it, which somehow communicated itself to the unconscious non-conspirators. The wadars did not betake themselves to their usual daily tasks, but lay listlessly about their wigwams ; while the rest, not so inured to ways of violence, were restless, and kept moving about in a feverish, furtive sort of way. Rudra Gowda's was by no means a safe house to attack, by reason of his many friends, but there was a great deal of loot.

And so the long, weary day passed by. As evening drew on, Durga Dèvi's babul kuran gradually became peopled by knots of men, who kept well within the shade of the trees, skulking among the bushes, or

lying *perdu* in the mangroves which fringed the river-bank ; it was hard to tell where they had come from. Gradually, and generally one by one, the assembly had swollen, yet, to the casual wayfarer, not more than half-a-dozen men at the outside would have been encountered when passing through the grove by the usual footpath. The sun had just set, darkness had not yet quite enveloped the drowsy earth, a faint, pale, meagre sickle of a moon was barely visible, but for a few moments, low down on the horizon—a sickle so non-luminous, so evanescent in its being, that it could only have been noticed by accident, or by those who, as was the case in the present instance, were keenly on the look-out for it. A coracle shot out from the further shore of Mother Gunga, was propelled across the stream by a nervous arm, watched by many admiring eyes, and presently Nagoji Naik has joined his men.

Nagoji stepped quietly and quickly on shore, where he waited for a moment or two till joined by his brother Pandoo, who had been detained concealing the frail bark in which they had crossed the river. Two or three of those who had watched the crossing

came forward eagerly to greet their celebrated leader ; but he waved them aside with an imperious gesture, and walked quickly towards the shrine of Durga Dèvi. Arrived at this spot, some low-whispered words of command were evidently issued, for four or five men saluting their chief dived into the recesses of the babul kuran, and were no more seen ; but a few minutes afterwards the low hooting of the bird of night was heard passing, as it were, from point to point on the edge of the grove of trees. Nagoji seemed to be listening intently (it had already grown so dark that it was very difficult to see more than a few paces in any direction, and of course the darkness was intensified by the surrounding trees), then, when the last hoot had died away, he said, as if satisfied, "Raghoo, light the torch !" In a moment or two the light was burning and shedding its radiance on the strange scene. A strange scene truly, and a weird one. The light emanated from a torch made of rags tightly bound round a stick, the rags themselves being saturated with oil. The steeping was repeated as occasion required, giving the light a fitful character, as, fed with fresh oil, it now

leaped on high, or the source of its brilliance diminishing, it waned in proportion. The huge trees thus thrown into red glare at one instant, and receding into sombre darkness the next, appeared fitting companions for the leering, diabolical-looking, crimson-stained boulder, an appropriate symbol of the friend it represented. The beings clustered round her shrine might well be taken for her agents as the light leaped and flickered, appearing to give movement to their features in fantastic mow and grin. The central figure is the naik himself, dressed as we saw him last, save that now he wears his cumbli thrown over his shoulder, and in his hand he holds a long, old-fashioned musket, the butt resting on the ground, a valuable, if ancient, weapon, for the dancing light causes ivory and silver, inlaid on the stock, to laugh and sparkle. On the naik's thigh is bound a sword of Eastern make, curved in shape and sharp as a razor. By his side is his brother, a slight, slim youth, not yet come to his full strength, and with a weak, undecided face. Opposite Nagoji is an unearthly looking figure, short, deformed, having a humped back, and

crooked, enormous legs, with a face repulsive almost beyond humanity; yet Raghoo, the bèder, the torchbearer, would follow his chief to the death, and give his life for him willingly; for the misshapen dwarf worships Nagoji, and loves him with the blind devotion of a dog. Nagoji had never spurned him; Nagoji had never made him feel that he was not as other men are. One more individual requires description, this was Ahmed, the Sidi, a giant in stature and in strength, coal black in colour, with the woolly hair and broad, flat nose of his race. Ahmed was another devoted adherent of the naik's, admiring him not only for his strength and courage, but also for his marvellous resource and calm, clear will. Ahmed was Nagoji's right hand, his most trusted lieutenant in all dangerous enterprises. The rest were a wild-looking lot enough, they were principally bèders and riff-raff Mahomedans from Jaffirabad; and there were also a few out-caste Mahars and Mangs, cruel, and utterly regardless of life, in all, about forty of the most desperate and cut-throat brutes one could come across in a long day's march! All of them were outlaws and Ishmaels, every man's

hand was against them, and theirs against every man.

A pause ensued, a pause of expectancy ; evidently some one was looked for, some signal awaited. A hoot from the western border of the kuran, the direction of Hirehgaon—was heard, and presently three men appeared in the semi-illuminated circle cast by the impromptu torch. Two of these were members of the robber-band, the third was a half-starved, mean-looking individual, with ragged, unkempt locks, and a fearful, wondering expression on his face. This was Timma, the Mahar, the very man who had challenged Bhimoo on a certain morning not very long ago. He was a creature of the patel's, and had been enlisted in the adventure in consequence of this fact. He salaamed respectfully to Nagoji, and then stated that he had been sent to show the way to Gowda-wadi. The torch was extinguished, and all the men closing in, followed Timma and Nagoji to the outskirts of the kuran. Here a halt was made, the scouts were called in to the main body by preconcerted signal, and then mustered by Ahmed the sidi. This done, he approached his leader, and re-

ported that there were forty-two men all told, exclusive of Nagoji, Pandoo, Timma, and the speaker. The men then closed in again and followed Nagoji, Pandoo, and Timma, the rear being brought up by Ahmed and Raghoo, specially placed there to see that there were no stragglers. Approaching the spot where the path left the river, another halt was called, and Nagoji and Ahmed, leaving the main body, went on cautiously in advance. They had not proceeded far when they were challenged by a man upon whom they came so suddenly as to be almost startled, although advised of the probability of meeting him, so dark was the night. The surprise was mutual, for their advance had been so noiseless that it had escaped the challenger till they were close upon him. The man on guard was Rama, the wadar naik, and it soon transpired that he had come thus far to meet them with fifteen of his men. Nagoji sent Rama and his party in advance, the majority to keep to the track, while three or four were detached to act as scouts on either side, and then the party moved on. Arrived at a spot about half a mile from Hirehgaon, the leading body came to a standstill, and were presently

joined by the rest. Again, after a few words of consultation, Nagoji and Ahmed, accompanied this time by Rama, went forward to reconnoitre. There was a small wayside temple near, where the halt had been made, and it was in the direction of this building that Nagoji and his attendants proceeded. Approaching the temple, a few dusky objects might be distinguished in the almost impenetrable gloom, they turned out to be Narrayen Rao, Bhimoo and some half a dozen others, men who favoured Bhimoo's cause in the village, or who were concerned in the frauds and villanies perpetrated by the kulkarni. Besides these there were eight or ten weavers, a caste always ready for dispute and faction—a quarrelsome, headstrong lot.

The whole force was now assembled ; Nagoji, as a matter of course, assumed the leadership, and collecting the ruffianly crew around him, he proceeded to unfold his plan of action and to issue his orders. He knew the scene of the coming operations very fairly, and had carefully matured his designs. Some eight or ten of his own men were told off and placed under Raghoo's command to form a cordon of sentinels,

cutting off all communication between the main village and Gowda-wadi. Raghoo had carefully surveyed the ground, and knew exactly how to place his men, and presently this body vanished into the surrounding darkness ; all those comprising it were trustworthy villains hardened in crime, who knew how much depended on their vigilance, and who might with confidence be relied upon. Their orders were to prevent any one passing between Hirehgaon and Gowda-wadi at all risks : " Kill any one who resists," is the last stern injunction. Bhimoo Patel and Narrayen Kulkarni, with their friends, were sent back to the village ; their task was to do their utmost to calm apprehension on the part of the villagers should there be any disturbance or outcry ; if any talk of going to the assistance of the household should arise they were even to suggest that it might be the dreaded dacoit naik at work. *That* would be quite sufficient to quench any longing to go and see what was happening at Gowda-wadi ! The weavers were absorbed into the main body, which now struck away to the right across the fields, so as to give the village of Hirehgaon a wide berth, and avoid the risk of encountering any

waif who might have wandered forth for purposes of his own. Timma, the Mahar, was also kept with the attacking party, his services being required as guide.

Quietly, unseen, steadily, the flank of the village is turned, and then the march is directed straight on Gowda-wadi; before investing the main building, Nagoji, with the instinct of a born general, proceeds to make the approaches safe. At a short distance from the collection of huts which gave its name to the place, another halt is made; Nagoji, Ahmed, and Raghoo, with Timma and some of the weavers, who knew the houses well, together with four men of the regular band, advance rapidly on the huts. In compliance with instructions received from Nagoji, Bhimoo and Narrayen Rao had contrived to inveigle away most of the inmates, and only one hut is found to be tenanted; the occupants are a feeble old man, a woman and her two children, one a little thing about three years old, the other an infant in arms; a startled exclamation from the old man, instantly silenced by a blow; a shriek from the woman who was promptly gagged; a series of violent screams from the child who could not be settled so easily, and then—ah! then!—Ahmed

was no soft nurse—a stifled cry, and presently the little thing is still enough! God be thanked the poor mother did not see that cruel grip! Poor little child, it has gone back to the God who gave it life, and trouble will never lay her heavy hand upon that innocent brow. The baby is asleep, sound asleep! some comfort for thee, poor frightened mother, when thou shalt discover thy loss! No time to be lost; on men! quick! quick! for the door is open through which the firelight from within shines broadly, merrily; ah! what is that? A dark figure dashes into the light, and speeds fleetly, oh! how fleetly, through the light and thence into the house. Fear-smitten heart, how it impels the flying feet! The alarm then is given; no further surprise will avail now. Shut to and bar the door, safe and fast, Luxumon and Maloo! Take the gun down, Tukaram. Let all bear themselves like men! Nagoji Naik is here!

The woman, for it was a woman, who had thus given the alarm to the members of Rudra's family, was the wife of one of the labourers who worked in the Gowda's fields; she had not gone away to the village

with the others, and happened, at the time that the dash was made at the huts, to be at the well ; from thence she had overheard the movements of the men, had distinguished the suppressed outcries of her alarmed neighbours, and had promptly rushed for the nearest haven, namely, the patel's house. Her first words were sufficient to excite alarm in her hearers' hearts, therefore the door was secured immediately. Rumours vague and formless, but nevertheless rumours, like clouds that presage the storm, had been bruited about concerning Nagoji and his band, and full credence was at once given to the runaway's surmises ; alarms so well grounded were easily aroused. Luxumon, Maloo, and Tukaram, Savitri, Moti, and Bhagirti, Ganpat, and his tiny sister were all in the house when the refugee rushed in, and there were also present two field-hands, by name Ballia and Vitoba, who were chatting with the rest when thus interrupted. The first impulse, as we have seen, was to secure the door. Next the old flint-lock, a venerable and dangerous-to-handle weapon, was taken down from the wall and carefully loaded with a handful of powder, a well-oiled rag, and a round dozen or

so of slugs, the whole being carefully topped up with a wedge of coarse paper ; the priming was anxiously looked to and the pan examined ; and then—long expectancy, breathless and agonizing ! Chimi (that was the name of the woman) was quite sure of the warrant for her alarm ; perhaps though, seeing that the intended surprise had been anticipated, the dacoits might decamp.

Vain hope ! Nagoji was not the man to be thus balked of his intended prey, or diverted from his purpose by so trifling an impediment as a closed door. He was very much annoyed when he saw the woman rush into the house, as he foresaw that the movement entailed a more serious attack than had seemed necessary in the first instance. The house was a massively-built one, and could resist attempts at battery stoutly, but he intended to see how many rupees Rudra Gowda had in it that night, or to know the reason why. A short parley was held among the three or four leading men, then Ahmed, by the direction of his chief, advanced and threw a fairly large stone at the door ; a small, square wicket in it was opened, and a voice (Luxumon's) demanded who

was there. "Nagoji Naik. Give way, or you are dead men!" The reply to this was a shot from the thundering old piece of ordnance aforesaid, and the wicket was promptly closed.

Luxumon and his brothers were not very much alarmed at the onslaught ; they knew that the house was strongly and substantially built, while they had great faith in the destructive powers of their ancestral gun and its terrifying effect ; moreover, the village was not far distant (not more than half a mile), and help would be sure to come if their assailants proceeded to extremities ; so, to discourage their foes and to warn their friends, they fired off the gun ; the operation partaking more of a defensive than an offensive nature. The four women and the two children were stowed away in the storeroom at the back of the house and told to keep quiet, while the men calmly awaited the course of events.

That shot was an unfortunate one, it roused at once to full activity all the demon in the naik's nature. It happened that at the time the shot was fired, Nagoji, his brother, Pandoo, Raghoo, Rama, the wadar naik, and two or three more, were standing in

a group fifty paces from the door, and right in front of it ; the shower of slugs, therefore, came hurtling in amongst them. Nagoji himself was hit in the leg ; Ahmed, who had advanced a few paces to throw the stone which had called forth the reply, was struck in the shoulder ; while Padoo, who was standing by his brother's side, fell to the earth with a bubbling, choking cry. Nagoji was on his knees beside him in an instant, and lifted the boy's head tenderly. " A light, a light ! " he shouted, the torch was once more put in requisition, then he saw, he who knew Death so well, he saw in a single flash that the grim monarch had overtaken his brother ; the one being on earth whom he loved ! the one green spot in the barren howling wilderness of his life ! A slug had struck the lad full in the throat just where it springs from the trunk. The boy could just recognise the naik. A trustful, wistful, what-does-it-all-mean kind of look, then the blood comes spirting up again, the poor pain-filled eyes glaze in death, the head rolls lifeless off the tender supporting shoulder, and Nagoji is indeed alone in this hard, strange world. Gently, gently, he laid the poor boy down, one choking sob which seemed

to tear him asunder, and then ? Ah ! then ! God help all those in yonder house if Nagoji decide their fate. Ahmed and Raghoo, too, no mercy to be looked for there ! Ahmed, with his tiger appetite whetted by the murder of the poor little child, and infuriated by the pain caused by his wound ; Raghoo, mad, because his beloved chief was in such dreadful sorrow, and, for his sake, he, too, had loved the poor boy ! Was he not Nagoji Naik's brother ? What evil chance directed that fatal shot ?

Springing up from the performance of his sad task, Nagoji directed his men to the jowari stacks, ordering them to bring up the bundles and pile them in front of the door. The bundles were brought, but the bearers hung back from getting under fire again after the lesson that had been read to them, till Nagoji himself stepped forward and commenced the task, first carefully slipping in the iron bolt which was on the outside of the door, thus shutting it irretrievably on those inside. No notice was taken by the defenders of the house, and presently the task proceeded rapidly enough. "Heap on the bundles high, my lads ; prepare for the feast of

Death !” No one has as yet fathomed the robber chief’s intention, save, perhaps, Ahmed and Raghoo. “My shoulder tingles badly ! Begone that baby face !” “The naik’s brother lies here behind me, dead ! Vengeance on his slayers !” So they smother conscience ; and the blood leaps madly through their veins ; a red mist is dancing before their eyes—“Blood ! blood ! blood !” That awful cry is ringing in their ears, though there is no sound in the still night air ; quietly, desperately, remorselessly, more and more vehemently the work goes on, the excitement is catching, it spreads and seizes one and all. “Tear down the jowari stacks ! bring the bundles sharp ! come along ! come along ! there is wild work on foot—what is it ? what is it ? Never mind, never mind ; press on, press on ; to-morrow we will count the cost !”

“Raghoo, bring the torch !” Ah ! a low shuddering mumur, everyone knew that the order was coming, and yet, no ! time enough when it comes. It *has* come. With firm, unfaltering hand the torch is applied, the pyre is lit, the sacrifice to dead Pandoo has begun. A dead silence reigns around, a silence

that might be felt ; there had been no noise before, but there was the scuffle of many feet, the eager, hurried whispering, the bustle of united action ; now dead, remorseless calm ; stony, breathless expectancy.

See ! the flames are leaping up, crawling, shooting, darting upward ever upward ; there is a shout from inside, is there not ? These raw villagers will give way, they cannot stand it much longer. Nagoji rouses himself ; the cattle in the adjacent stabling are getting uneasy ; *they* must not perish in the flames, such a crime would bring down denunciations from all quarters ; roast a few helpless women and children, oh, Nagoji Naik, and welcome ; but spare, oh, spare the animals sacred to Brahma ! Let one perish at your peril ! So "let the animals loose !" he shouts ; the spell is broken, the mob breaks loose, and now hallooing and yelling betakes itself to the stables. Make as much noise as you like ; no one will disturb you ; not one of those two hundred and odd men, away in yonder village, now broad awake and gazing awe-struck at the writhing flames, will interrupt you. All Hirehgaon is wide awake by this time, but Bhimoo

and Narrayen do their work well ; Nagoji the dacoit, Nagoji the merciless is there with his band of devils ; leave him alone ! leave him alone ! let him be ! let him be !

What is this ? The voices of strong men in agony. " Let us out ! Let us out ! " The screaming of women in panic-stricken fear, " God help us ! God help us ! " God help you indeed, poor creatures, for vain is the help of man. Batter at the door as you may, oh, brethren three, no help, no help ! The flames are shooting high in air now ; look how they illumine the features of the surrounding watchers. See the different expressions ; here fury, lust of blood, anger ; there uncertainty, disappointed avarice, fear. " We came to *loot* Rudra's house, not to *burn* it and kill his wife and children," murmur the waders, the weavers, and the rest ; they dare not speak too loud, for what would they be before the ruffianly crew with whom they are temporarily associated ? Ah ! the roof falls in with a thundering sound, the flames sink for a second or two, and then rise again leaping, bowing, twisting, advancing, retreating, entwining ; ha ! ha ! the merry, merry dance

of Death ! Don't you hear Durga Dèvi laughing. I swear she must have left her babul kuran to-night ! What was that which rang up to heaven when the roof came thundering down ? Don't mind, don't mind ! never speak of it. Ah ! some of you will never forget that sound, the wail of strong men in their death-agony. A goodly holocaust, dead Pandoo ! worthy of the brother of a robber chief ! Panduba ! the sacrifice is completed !

CHAPTER VI.

RUDRA GOWDA COMES HOME.

IT is early morning again at Hirehgaon. The sun has just risen, and is looking on the earth through a thin veil of tears, for it has been raining steadily for the last two hours, a quiet, persistent drizzle which is just the kind of rain the crops want to coax them gently into ear. Obscuring the jolly, radiant face of the god of day but slightly, is a mass of clouds of a peculiar, soft rose-grey colour fading away on the edges to a pure white, clouds so soft and fluffy in their appearance as to give one the idea that they might be handled could a hand only get near enough to them to touch them. A crowd is assembled round the smoking ruins of what was but last evening Rudra Gowda's home. The manhood, and for the matter of that, the womanhood, too, of Hirehgaon do not mind coming to see what is to be seen, now that it is d

light, and those horrid people, the dacoits, and that peculiarly objectionable individual, Nagoji Naik in particular, have made themselves scarce. Bhimoo Gowda is there, and Narrayen Rao and their friends. To tell the truth, they are dreadfully scared at the turn taken by events ; they never calculated on anything so awful as this. They would have liked to have seen Rudra eased of a few of his rupees, they did not mean to commit—hush ! the awful word—murder ! Yet this is what has happened, and murder on a wholesale scale too. List to the wail of that frantic woman in yonder hut. “ Rachel weeping for her children, and will not be comforted, because they are not.” What had that poor thing and her innocent child done to you, Bhimoo, and to you, Narrayen, that you should have brought this terrible fate on them ? And the worst of it all is that Nagoji has gone !—away into Jaffirabad. There will be a searching inquiry, who knows what secrets may not be dragged forth into the light ? Anxious men are Bhimoo and Narrayen and their friends ; anxious and heavy-hearted. Rama Naik is busy packing up, down there at the village. He and his wadars think

it advisable to get away from Hirehgaon with the least possible delay, and their mat houses, etc., are disappearing as if by magic. Timma Mahar has gone off to fetch the police, having been deputed to do so by the patel as soon as Nagoji and his men have got a good start.

Rudra's house looks bare and ghastly enough. The roof in the centre has fallen in, and nought remains but the walls. The three rooms at the side and back are intact, and for the most part are still roofed in. The large door in front is burned away, and a huge gap shows where it was and discloses a mass of charred *débris* choking up the centre room, *débris* still sullenly smoking. No one has ventured inside yet or attempted to pry into the awful secrets hid beneath that black, smouldering heap. Wait till the police come. That is the policy that is being pursued.

Timma sped away on his mission at very earliest dawn, taking a straight line for the frontier post which was placed on the bank of the river Gunga at the point, where the high road crossed it. A naik and four men were on duty here and two sowars, or mounted police also, who did the road work,

patrolling at intervals, both by night and day. The outpost was some two miles from the scene of the tragedy of the preceding night, and what with questioning Timma, reading Bhimoo Patel's report, which had been indited by Narrayen Rao, getting into their uniforms, and making arrangements generally, full three hours elapsed before the naik in command and two of his men arrived at the scene of the crime. One of the sowars accompanied the party, and he, very soon after reaching Gowda-wadi, was galloping hard for Muffinapur, the headquarters of the Taluka in which Hirehgaon is situated, with a written report to the chief-constable from the naik giving hurried details of the offence which had been committed. Muffinapur is about five miles distant from Hirehgaon. Meanwhile, the naik and his two men took off their belts, got some milk and chupatties brought to them, and proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as they could under a shady tree till some higher authority should arrive. Till then, every one was warned away from the ruins, which were jealously guarded by the police, and, under their directions, by the village watchmen.

Muffinapur is a well-to-do populous place almost deserving the name of a town ; it was situated at the junction of two high roads, namely, the Lolapur-Jaffirabad and the Lolapur-Dholpur roads ; it happened, therefore, that there was a telegraph-station there amalgamated with the post-office. The sowar galloped into Muffinapur—you may be sure that he imparted all the *éclat* that he could to his approach—and drew bridle at the police headquarters. The chief-constable was very soon master of the naik's report and also of all the information to be extracted from his messenger, who, as may be guessed, did not tone down anything. For a wonder, the chief-constable and the Mamlatdar got on together very well. Both men were Brahmins, but the chief-constable was by a good deal the more able man of the two ; still, he went away to consult his brother magnate, this by way of lessening his own responsibility should his actions not meet with the approval of his superiors. The upshot of it all was that a telegram was despatched to the police superintendent at Lolapur embodying as far as was possible, and as far as was known, the details of the dacoity.

The crime was a most daring one ; Nagoji Naik's career must be checked somehow or other. There is a limit to human endurance. Burning down Rudra's house and killing all his family ! Rudra is one of the most influential men in the Taluka. No, no, it cannot be endured.

Anderson was just going to sit down to breakfast when the telegram was put into his hands ; on reading it, his indignation knew no bounds, Nagoji had often laughed at his beard, as the native saying has it, and here was an unparalleled atrocity committed in the most insolent manner quite close to the Queen's highway. Bob's breakfast was spoilt for that morning, at all events ; he told Mrs. Anderson that he must be off at once, and asked her to make arrangements for him in the feeding and sleeping line, as he might be away for three or four days. He called Gainu, the naik in command of his guard, a big, burly Mahratha with curled whiskers and long moustache, a loud talker but a brave man all the same, and told him that he would be wanted, giving him directions to procure a bonga at once, (dâks were always ready laid along the Lolapur-Dholpur road),

and then he set off to the Collector's, and told him all about it. Young Duckworth was present and lent a greedy ear to the tale ; when his chief wound up by expressing his intention of starting immediately for the scene of the outrage, the young fellow petitioned earnestly to be allowed to accompany him. Bob assented after a little hesitation. "Well then, young 'un, turn up at my bungalow in a couple of hours' time, and you had better bring your revolver with you." They were away at the appointed time, Gainu in the front seat beside the driver, Bob, and his young companion behind. Mrs. Anderson and the children watched them as far as the front gate, where they turned into the road and were lost to sight, and then with a saddened heart she went back into the house and resumed her ordinary occupations ; the house was so dull without Bob, his loud, strong voice, his great, hearty laugh, his joke with the children, his very clumsiness knocking down chairs and smashing frail articles, were all sadly missed the moment his back was turned. Dear old Bob ! She was very fond of him, with all his faults. Faults ? What *are* you talking about ?

I should like to see any one talk to Mrs. Anderson about Bob's *faults*; she would fly at such an one, and peck him or her (especially her) without mercy. I am speaking metaphorically, mind you, pure, unadulterated metaphor.

The telegram to the "Superintending Sahib" having been despatched, Chief-constable Anant Rao set about despatching his breakfast, an occupation which lasted some two hours. Meanwhile, as many men as could be spared from headquarters were ordered out, and told to prepare to accompany him to Hirehgaon. Breakfast over, Anant Rao emerged from his quarters, got up in his dark-blue uniform, mounted his ambling pony, and putting himself at the head of his men, started away. There were eight constables and a naik, besides the sowar, all armed with musket and bayonet. Anant Rao was a small, spare man, with a very keen, intelligent face, he looked what he was, a smart, active officer. He moved off first in the direction of the outpost on the river-bank where the two men who had been left behind were added to the party, one sowar only being deemed sufficient garrison under the present

urgent circumstances. They then marched on to Hirehgaon, which place was reached at about four in the afternoon. The men bivouacked in the huts at Gowda-wadi ; but Anant Rao at once set about making inquiries of the assembled villagers, Bhimoo Gowda and Narrayen Kulkarni being especially forward in their replies, while the honest indignation that fired them at the sight of the handiwork of that accursed being Nagoji Naik was most admirable to behold. Anant Rao was no fool, oh no ! he took in everything very quietly, but very assiduously. He did not say anything to anyone about the telegram sent that morning to Lolapur, he listened and he questioned in an outwardly casual sort of way, but all the time it was running in his head " Rudra's house was not an easy one to attack even for Nagoji, surely I have heard that there was bad blood (only a little, you know ;, but he knew what that meant) between the old Gowda and Bhimhoo and Narrayen and the rest ;" and so the twinkling little eyes were very watchful, the listening ears very attentive. This was no common dacoity ; something might be made of it—*must* be made of it ; an inspectorship seemed

to be opening up before the ambitious little man. He did not go into the house, he knew his chief would arrive very soon, or else he would get orders to act; his cue now was to watch carefully—very carefully.

Rudra Gowda and young Hari have enjoyed their little trip immensely. The great Venayek Rao has been most affable; that little affair with Goculdass will very soon be arranged; the mighty man of law will smite the man of money hip and thigh. Of course, it will cost a little; but victory seems to be sure. Hari's mind has been opening up wonderfully; a little pepper and salt vinegar—which must all come in due time—and the oyster will be perfect; at all events, quite perfect enough for Hirehgaon. It is getting towards evening now; "Let us hurry on, oh, Hari, my son; there are the mango trees." "What are all those people doing there?" The old man's eyes are strained eagerly in the direction of his home; the roof ought to be visible by this time; something has happened! what is it? Urge on the piebald; a few more seconds and Rudra is in the midst of the crowd, has arrived in front of his house, is at

the very door ; the horse stops from sheer force of habit, the old man looks round fearfully, then his hands go up towards the heavens, and with one low, deep groan, he falls headlong from his saddle. Rejoice, oh, Bhimoo ! Rejoice, oh, Narrayen Rao ! Rudra Gowda is not likely to trouble you much now. Goculdass, a fig for Mr. Venayek Raghonath Joshi, *vakil* of Lolapur. Rudra Gowda has gone home.

CHAPTER VII.

NAGOJI'S HANDIWORK.

"CLANKETY, clank, clank, clank," as the ponies canter along the road, the refrain monotonous, never ending, never beginning, of the swaying pole and the swinging curricule-sort of bar on the animals' backs, as they press on; "clack, clack, clack-clack" go the iron shoes, as they trot along the hard metalled road. Young Duckworth is getting very tired of it all; it is nearly two o'clock in the morning now, and that music has been ringing in his ears for nearly ten hours. Bob is rather "short"—an expressive word that—and has been consuming cheroot after cheroot as if he were a perfect volcano, so that conversation is disjointed and unsatisfactory; the rocking to and fro of the rickety old tonga is very tiring, and the night is very dark, so that nothing can be seen to interest the eye or occupy

the mind ; Duckworth envies Gainu in the front seat, that worthy wrapped in his cumbli slumbers sweetly, only waking when the ponies are changed and going off to sleep the instant they move on again in the most provoking manner. Duckworth was very eager and keen at starting, he would give a good deal to be able to woo Morpheus now as easily as does Gainu. At seven o'clock they had halted for half an hour to partake of some of the good things provided by Mrs. Anderson, otherwise they have been going along like this ever since four in the afternoon, merely getting the relief of an alteration in position for two or three minutes at each place where the ponies were changed ; and young Duckworth was very tired of it all, tired and cross. They were getting near to their destination now, this was their last stage, thank goodness ; Bob had hardly spoken a word the whole way ; at starting he had wrapped a shepherd's plaid round his legs, lighted a cheroot, settled himself in a corner, and there he was. He was in one of those quiet, smouldering fits of rage that men of his stamp are subject to, he was very good-natured and easy-going, but his being was stirred to its inmost depths now, and he

was a dangerous man to trifle with. Nagoji had escaped him on one or two previous occasions ; Bob swore between his clenched teeth to be even with him this time, could it by any possibility be compassed, and his eyes looked very vindictive ; the whole outrage was such an awful one, the burning of the poor things, the women and children too ! poor helpless creatures ! Nagoji, the avenger is on the way, take heed to thyself !

Here they are at last. The driver has been making the most unearthly noises upon a yard of battered copper for the last six or seven minutes : noises cheerful in young Duckworth's ears, for they tell that his purgatory is drawing to an end. Bob pays no attention ; as for Gainu, he slumbers on, he even snores almost defiantly. A jerk and a bang,—Gainu nearly falls out of the tonga, and mutters something unintelligible ; I fancy he is calling the driver names, here is a dim light proceeding from some building on the side of the road ; the sowar with his boots off comes blundering out rubbing his eyes, three or four objects like gigantic grubs in appearance get up on their feet and reveal themselves in their true characters, men

enveloped in the eternal cumbli ; there is a gurgling sound close by—running water—here we are at the frontier post.

The three men turn out of the tonga, and Bob and Duckworth go stamping in to the police "chowkey," for their feet are numbed and cramped after their long drive. Gainu sees to the things being taken out of the carriage, and then the ponies and the trap move on and are presently lost in the darkness. Bob begins questioning the sowar and the others about the dacoity, but soon finds out that it is mere waste of breath ; the answers he gets are all too evidently given in the "whatever-master-pleases" sort of style, so he desists, administers some whiskey and soda to the young 'un, has some himself, and then the blankets and pillows are on the ground. "Turn in, young 'un, and have a couple of hours' rest ; call me at daybreak, Gainu," and the two are soon sound, sound asleep. Gainu has slept more or less ever since they had left Lolapur, so he is comparatively fresh, and he and the sowar and the others go outside, light a fire, squat round it on their "hunkers," and chat and pass the hookah (made of a cocoanut) round and round from

hand to hand, or rather mouth to mouth. Gainu does not try to gain any information, he is not going to demean himself in that manner, but he tells lies about his own and the superintending sahib's prowess till the skins of his unsophisticated hearers creep doubtless; the hairs of their heads would have stood on end if they had got any, they had not; their heads were all shaven for the sake of cleanliness and of comfort as well as of custom.

Time passes, gradually daylight comes on; it is a sulky looking morning, great masses of cloud are hurrying by, in colour reminding one of the smoke that hangs over London in the early dawn when seen from a little distance; you know that when the sun comes up he will be the same kind of red that he was when he went to bed last night; the river Gunga is running past in a troubled stream, looking like dirty ginger beer, the air is damp and moist, amounting almost to a veritable mist. "Four o'clock, sahib!" it is much more like half-past five, but no matter. Gainu, who is not above making himself useful on occasions, has got some hot water ready and has half-boiled three or four eggs; while the two gentlemen are discussing

them and some hot, fragrant coffee, let us take a look at the place.

The "chowkey," as the building they had slept in was called, was a little square edifice, very new, built of nice grey stone with a nice tiled roof—in style a kind of compromise between a small chapel and a park-gate lodge—pretty pointed windows, highly polished teak wood doors. "Very neat and chaste," that is what Fergusson, the Executive Engineer of Lolapur used to say about it, and certain other kindred erections in various parts of the district, and then he would point out to you gargoyles and mulions, and I know not what. "*Very neat and chaste,*" indeed, Mr. Fergusson, but rayther, don't you think?—well, well, well, well, money must be spent, you know. Nearly opposite the chowkey was a long, narrow, thatched shed, and inside it were some eight or ten quadrupeds of various sorts who seemed to be purged of all earthly passions, till a neighbour got within reach of teeth or heels, when Beelzebub asserted himself. This was the stable for the dâk animals owned by Rustomji Jamsetji, diplomaed dâk-contractor to the Government of Quack-Quack—that is what he called

himself, at least—goodness only knows what he meant, or who was the ingenious humourist that granted him a diploma? or what the guileless Mr. Rustomji imagined to be a diploma—rather a neat practical joke by the I. H.—or was the diploma a myth of the wily Zoroastrian's creation?

The chowkey was situated in the lands of Awak-halli, a small hamlet, and no sooner had the police superintendent arrived than a man went off to the village, which was distant about a quarter of a mile, to give notice of the event, and very shortly the patel and half a dozen more men came down to the spot. By this time, however, the sahib-logue were asleep, and could not be disturbed on any account, but Gainu took it upon himself to send two mahars off to Hirehgaon to inform Anant Rao; and the information was given in the presence of Bhimoo and Narrayen Rao. Though they had fully expected the intelligence sooner or later, its actual confirmation certainly unhinged them a little, and the sharp little chief-constable or "fouzdar," as he was called usually, made a mental note concerning their evident perturbation; he, however, made no sign, being fully

aware that it behoved him to keep on the alert, and watch closely every movement of his companions, so no one was sent to meet the European officials, though both the patel and the kulkarni were most anxious that someone should go if only as a mark of respect. They even offered to go themselves, but Anant Rao merely said in a dry sort of way that it was unnecessary. The plot is thickening, the superintending sahib is coming, the rumour spreads to the village, and by daylight every man, woman, and child in Hirehgaon that can get away is gathered in the neighbourhood of Rudra Gowda's house waiting and watching to see what will happen.

“Here they come! Here come the sahib-logue.”

It is whispered from one to another, and all eyes are turned towards the little group that is approaching. They have walked over, and with them have come the Patel of Avakhalli and three or four more. Anant Rao goes to meet them, and so do Bhimoo and Narayen Rao. The new comers salute all in return for their respectful salaams. Mr. Anderson turns towards Anant Rao, and begins questioning him; there are supposed to be eight bodies, at least in yonder black,

grimy ruin. Bob hears with sorrow of Rudra's sad end, for he knew and respected the old man, and he also learns, for the first time, of the cruel murder of the poor little child in the ryot's house at Gowda-wadi ; his face clouds over afresh, and the old set look comes on it again—he had to a certain extent lost it since he he had been active in the chase after that long weary drive which had been very hateful to him. As he surveys the scene of the crime, and counts up the black list of murders, his wrath gains fresh fuel. Ten lives lost ! Nagoji ! thou shalt pay dearly for this, or Bob Anderson shall know the reason why. Anant Rao contents himself with putting the superintendent *au fait* as to facts ; surmises and conclusions he keeps to himself for the present : there are listeners about ; besides, time enough when his counsel is asked. Presently the mamlatdar comes up thinking that he might be of use ; he has left his aval karkun in charge of his office at headquarters, and has started away himself on his sober pony before daybreak. With him are a couple of his office peons, and he tells the superintendent that he has taken it upon himself to order up reinforcements in the shape of ten more policemen

from posts adjacent to Muffinapur ; he is very pleased when Mr. Anderson praises him for his forethought and originality ; it is not often he is praised for the possession of such qualities. The men will be up very soon, he goes on to say.

By the side of his own familiar well, the rigid corpse of old Rudra Gowda is lying, covered over with a coarse sheet ; at his feet is sitting the poor boy Hari, dazed, bewildered ; he has not yet grasped the full horror of the situation ; he is now Patel of Hirehgaon in his own person, but he has not yet recovered sufficiently to be aware of his new honours and position ; father, mother, brothers, relations, house and home, all swept away from him by one fell, and to him instantaneous, stroke ! He has yet two sisters, but they are both married and living with their husbands in villages far remote from the home of their infancy. Poor boy ! Poor boy ! no wonder that he feels dazed and numbed.

Arrived at the house itself, Bob made no stay, but, accompanied by Duckworth and Anant Rao, made straight for the gaping doorway. A policeman was standing on guard here, orders were given to him to

allow no one to follow, and the three men attended by two constables, specially singled out by Anant Rao, passed inside. The police formed a half-circle, and kept off the inquisitive, eager, restless, breathless crowd. Bhimoo and Narayen Rao are in an agony ; they *know* what must be found ; what shape will it take ? What will be the next turn in fortune's wheel ? The centre court is choked up with half-charred tiles, burned charcoaled beams, grass thatch reduced to a fine, impalpable grey powder ; a soft yielding mass of matter giving under the searchers' tread and nearly reaching to their knees. " My God ! "—more than an exclamation, a shout, almost a shriek—breaks from the young assistant's lips as he staggers back with pointing hand and horror-stricken face from an object, slightly protruding above the mass. At first sight it looks like a charred stump of wood, and for such had young Duckworth taken it, till, almost touching it, a casual glance revealed it as a charred stump indeed, but not of wood—the charred remains of a human being. Details need not be given. Duckworth was new to the work, he had not looked on such gruesome sights before, and for the moment

his manhood has departed ; he is the young light-hearted boy he really is, taking an awful lesson in the realities of his profession. The rest gather round, the look on Bob's face darkens yet more, his mouth closes more firmly than ever. Tread lightly men, tread lightly ; there must be more poor relics of the same description close at hand. Gently, gently, turn over the calcined rubbish ; look for those precious things it hides, the caskets (perishable though they be), but still the caskets, of those immortal never-dying jewels, the souls of men and women. Ah ! here is another ! and another ! Anant Rao, forgetful even of his caste, so deep is the fearful engrossing excitement, assists as busily as the rest in the search ; the whole court has now been looked over, and six bodies have been found, five are men, the sixth is a woman. This last is lying just in front of the door which opens into the store-room or tool-house at the back of the centre room. Prompted by some undefinable, inexpressible feeling, Anant Rao, pressed this door ; though it had resisted the action of the fire so far as to hold together sufficiently to guard the contents of the interior from view, this slight pressure caused it to give way.

Anant Rao's hand went through the woodwork, and with an indescribable, ghostly, shuddering sort of sound, the whole fabric collapsed, and the dread secret veiled behind it was given up. Experienced and case-hardened as Anant Rao was from constant contact with criminals and their vile handiwork, even he sprang back with a low cry; somehow no one had thought of the women and children being put away in this place of safety; yet here they were. Nearest to the door was poor little Ganpat, the fire had reached him, and the top of the poor little shaven head was like a partially consumed coal; for the rest they lay in a row as if asleep, or rather, they suggested the idea of wax figures, so still and solemn they lay, no pain on the upturned faces, the postures all easy and unconstrained. There was a curious look though about them;—the hideous thought once conceived could not be forced away—it was too true; they had been baked, regularly cooked. The stone room had proved nothing more or less than a huge oven; from the expression on each face the death seemed to have been a painless one, suffocation had intervened. Thank God! Thank God! Duckworth

was quite unmanned now, he sobbed undisguisedly, and let no one think the worse of him on that account. Believe me, often and often the highest courage and the most womanly tenderness are combined ; it is of such stuff as this that the true heroes of this world are made ; full manhood will teach the boy control.

“ Well, well ! we have found them all at last,” says Bob, inflating his great broad chest with an enormous sigh. He feels fearfully like playing the woman too, so he works it off with a “ Get out of the way, you thundering idiot ! ” to a poor constable, who was only doing what was very natural, that is, crowding in to see as much as he could ; then he clears his throat, uses his pocket-handkerchief with a noise like a war-trumpet, catches Duckworth a slap on the back which quite staggers the young 'un, and Richard is himself again. Nearest, in fact, at the door, lies little Ganpat, then comes his mother, Moti, with the tiny infant placidly resting in her arms ; at her side is bright, vivacious Bhagirti, quiet enough now, and beyond her is the labourer's wife, who had rushed in to give the alarm. Thy haven of safety has failed thee, then, poor creature

Working-parties are now organised, and gradually, one by one, his dead are brought out to poor Hari, and poor dead Rudra resting there near the well. They bring them out slowly and tenderly ; even those shapeless things in the front hall are carefully, carefully brought. Who is this? Eager eyes in awe-struck expectancy, in sickening hope, are straining. Ah, too true ! the foreboding is too true ! A white-haired, tottering old crone, a heavy, stupid-looking man ; with two little children press past the guardian policemen, who let them pass, pitying, sympathising. That flying woman was the old croon's daughter, the stupid-looking man's wife, the wondering little children's mother. Ah, then, Ballia and Vitoba are there too ! Can it be? Can it be? But which—which? The women and children we can recognise, here are the well-remembered features still ; but *these* shapeless masses, who can tell whose spirit animated them ? This must be Savitri ; there are some fragments of a sari still remaining. The rest ! Ah ! which is which? Women's shrieks go up to heaven. "He must be there ! He must be there !" is the refrain from each sorrow-stricken wife. But which is which? Ah ! which is which?

The bodies all brought out, a list is made. There are eleven corpses in all, including those of the two children. Luxumon, Malloo, Tukaram, sons of Rudra ; Ballia, son of Gopal ; Vitoba, son of Balloo ; Savitri, wife of Rudra ; Moti, wife of Luxumon, Bhagirti, wife of Tukaram ; Chimi, wife of Dowlat ; Ganpat and an infant, children of Luxumon. To these have to be added Govind, son of Jania (the child murdered by the Sidi), and Rudra, son of Luxumon, Patel of Hirehgaon (so it goes in the official catalogue), a goodly list of casualties surely. Nagoji, do you feel proud ? The police superintendent is furiously angry.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE TRAIL.

THE sun is fairly high in the heavens now—all this has taken time. Bob is an old campaigner, and knows well the truth of the old adage, “the more haste, the worse speed.” He calls for breakfast, and goes away with the young ’un under the shade of the trees in the garden below the well; here they can eat free from observation, and Bob intends shortly to sound his lieutenant, Anant Rao, in whose intelligence and penetration he has great faith. He has now seen things for himself, and is ready for comment from a competent critic. Meanwhile the Mamlatdar convenes a “panch” (a kind of jury composed of five persons presumably the most influential and intelligent that can be secured), and directs them to hold an inquiry into the circum-

stances attending the death of the deceased persons. Anant Rao's eyes twinkle somewhat mischievously when the two first names on the panel are announced, *i.e.*, Bhimoo Patel and Narrayen Kulkarni. The inquiry does not last very long; murder against Nagoji and other persons unknown, in the case of the eleven found inside the house; murder against Ahmed the Sidi in the case of the poor child. Govind, whose mother's evidence is taken, poor thing, cannot say much. "The sidi took the child, I found the child dead—dead! strangled!" she repeats in a hysterical way, and then breaks into wild weepings. Let her have her cry, the pain will pass away with Time, gentle old Time! Rudra's death is "the visitation of God," at least, that is a free translation of the verdict brought in. "Murder, doubly damned murder," Bob calls it, when he hears the results of their deliberations by-and-by. Breakfast over—cheroots—Bob gets his back up against a tree, gets Anant Rao to sit down near him, and prepares to digest his meal and the fouzdar's information at one and the same time. Anant tells his story, omitting nothing; lays no particular stress upon the enmity

alleged to have existed between Rudra, and Bhimoo, and Narrayen (Bob has heard something of it too, and makes a mental note), but emphasises markedly the daring nature of the dacoity, for, as has been said before, Rudra was a very notable character in the neighbourhood, and expresses his opinion forcibly that even Nagoji, bold as he was, would never have attempted so hazardous an enterprise without some unusual incentive, and then rising, he asks Bob to follow him. Curiosity awakened, both the gentlemen accède to his request, and, Anant Rao leading the way, they presently arrived at a secluded spot inside the grove of fruit trees ; the place presents the appearance of an improvised shambles, the ground is soaked with blood, and there are bits of offal, sheep's wool, &c., about ; and, most of all, in a ditch close by, where it must have fallen unheeded, and was partially covered with long grass, lay a sheep's head but recently severed from the trunk. Anderson and Duckworth are in a way interested, but are, all the same, at a loss to fathom the fouzdar's meaning in his actions. When the cattle were let loose, as we have seen, during the burning of Rudra's house, a number

of sheep that were penned in with them were set at liberty too. As may have been gathered from the story, no attempt was made to rob the house, Nagoji's sombre fury at the death of his brother having put all thoughts of plunder out of his head, so, when the gang of dacoits (proper) withdrew, their quondam associates were left empty handed with the cheerful conviction clearly imprinted on their minds that they had indulged in arson and wholesale murder; and for what? Nothing at all! The horned cattle on being set free, scampered away into the fields, rejoicing in their freedom, but the silly sheep remained huddled together, and did not venture far from the place. Rama Naik and his wadars perceived this, and some ten or so of the foolish, fleecy things paid the penalty of their foolishness with their lives. They were taken away to this secluded place, slaughtered, and divided among their captors. Timma the Mahar had his share and a good large one too, and there is little doubt but that some of the more Bohemian among the weavers, or "koshti-logue" as they are called, walked off with substantial portions as well. A disreputable drunken lot are these koshtis, not very particular

as to caste at a pinch. Anant Rao had chanced upon this spot by accident in the early morning, knew the full value of his discovery, and kept that discovery quietly to himself. He has found out that a few sheep were usually penned at night-time in Rudra Gowda's house, and he now imparts this piece of information to Bob, who immediately awakens to the importance of the fouzdar's find. Anant Rao is sent back to the house and presently he returns with Hari and two policemen. An attempt was made by some among the crowd to follow, but the attempt was discouraged. Bhimoo and Narrayen would have liked to have known what was in the wind, but the move did not excite their apprehensions much. Hari had been away on that fatal night, there was nothing in the garden—the sahibs want to speak to him, that is all. You don't know about the sheep then? Oh, Bhimoo! Oh, Narrayen Appal!

Hari is still rather at sea, but Bob speaks to him kindly and reassuringly, and the boy wakes up a little. "Bring that sheep's head here;" this to one of the policemen. The man brings it—being a Ma-

homedan, he does not object * to the task. Hari at once recognises it as having belonged to a sheep of his father's ; the boy was not likely to be mistaken, to his lot had fallen the duty of looking after Rudra's sheep, and it happened—one of those strange coincidences which men call luck—that the old Gowda's private mark had been a peculiarly shaped cut in the ear, and there was the mark ! Bob rouses up now, the old hound has caught the scent ; one policeman is left near the spot, not too near, yet near enough to see if any one approaches it, and then the rest turn back to the chief centre of interest.

On the way an animated conversation takes place between the superintendent and his two assistants ; Duckworth is wide awake now ; gone are all traces of fatigue, he does not think of last night spent in all the agony of a long tonga journey, he is as keen as keen can be. Anant Rao now tells his chief all his suspicions and surmises, Anderson quickly pieces the bits together ; the first thing to do is house-to-house

* The orthodox high-caste Hindu will not touch meat of any description. Mahomedans, however, have no objection to doing so, provided always that the meat be not swine's flesh.

visitation in the village. Returning then to the scene of the tragedy, where the panch have finished their deliberations, Bob declares his intention of going straightway to Hirehgaon itself. What is in the wind now? think the guilty ones. Young Hari is left with his dead; arrangements are in progress for their ceremonial cremation; poor Hari must rouse himself, his mind will be fully occupied now.

The three officers, with two constables, move off in the direction of the village. Timma Mahar comes forward officiously to show the way, Bhimoo, Narrayen, and a few of the leading men in the village follow; the crowd get divided into two, a moiety go with the sahibs, the rest stay on at Gowda-wadi; a few go back to their usual avocations; these last are mostly women; children have to be attended to, husbands will want their food presently, there will be bones to pick if none is ready for them when they come in hungry; nothing stimulates the appetite like sightseeing, nothing so apt to move to anger as hunger.

Timma makes for the gateway, but to his astonishment his followers turn off towards the mahar-wadi

what can they want there? The first house reached, Bob and his myrmidons, not Anant Rao, institute a search. Wonder on every face; Timma is not enlightened yet. Nothing—and so on for three or four houses, till suddenly, at one, tenanted by a decrepit old woman, an exclamation bursts from the Mahomedan constable's lips, and he drags forth to light from the recesses of a dark and dirty corner, a large piece of raw meat. "What is this?" The old lady breaks out in a shrill treble, the words tumbling over one another; the meaning of it all is that Timma gave it to her. Ask him, there he is; she did not steal it, not she. "Why don't you speak, you Timma?" and then if all that the old lady says about Timma's female relations is true, or anything approaching to truth, one can only say they must be an uncommonly bad lot. The truth breaks on Timma like a lightning flash: the sahibs must be in league with the Prince of Darkness himself. Before he has time to think more, he is handcuffed. At the sight, Bhimoo's liver turns to water. Timma in the hands of the police!—then all is up. He and Narrayen Rao begin to edge off; but no, the police sahib wants

them. Anant Rao is very polite in his attentions; keeps very close to them. Timma is marched off to the chowdi, where, on a certain evening, a misunderstanding had arisen between the two watandar patels. Bhimoo recalls the occasion with an inward groan; one of the attendant policemen is sent off to bring up more men from Gowda-wadi, and the search goes on. Nothing more is found however. Timma vows to himself never to be foolishly generous again with other people's property; that is, provided he gets out of this scrape; but no! it is hopeless, the sahib-logue are sheitans. Interrogated as to how he came by the meat, he stoutly denies having had anything to do with it. Confronted with the object of his charity (the decrepit old dame in whose house the mutton was found), he relapses into sullen silence—object of charity very much the reverse, likewise Timma's wife. Object of charity evidently considers it to be her highest duty to hold her patron up to scorn. He give me the meat, indeed! Stolen meat, and then pretend he didn't! Timma's wife calls herself the most unfortunate woman under the sun; the reprobate, to go stealing sheep, and bringing mutton

home and saying that it had been given him, while all the while it was stolen ! They little thought, those foolish females, that they were weaving the first strands of the rope for Timma's neck ; but so it was, oh, brawling creatures of little sense !

The police reinforcements came up in due time, and Bob then found himself at the head of a force with which, by the time he knew when and where to strike the blow, he could act satisfactorily. There was a lull in the activity of the operations, but things were now *en train* ; time was needed to bring about results. There was a "dharam-sala," or rest house, just outside the village, and this, under Gainu's direction, was speedily cleaned out and made as habitable as possible for the sahibs, and thither Bob and Duckworth proceeded ; tinned soup and preserved meats came in usefully for dinner. The young 'un was tired, and very soon sought his pillow ; but the older and more experienced man waited on, his soul on fire in eager expectation of something more. Nor was he disappointed ; about nine o'clock, Gainu appeared and told him that Anant Rao wished to speak to him. This was exactly what Bob's prophetic

soul had whispered, and he at once gave orders for his admittance. Anant Rao's face showed success in every line of it. Timma had told him everything—goodness only knows what had made that heretofore impenetrable individual so communicative. Bob did not stay to inquire ; a hurried outline of the principal circumstances was given by the chief-constable, and then Timma was sent for, and shortly appeared, guarded by two stalwart members of the force. When asked to repeat his story to the sahibs, his former denseness seemed to be once more descending upon him ; but—who knows? probably something in that fouzdar's eye—he presently becomes more communicative ; the whole story, so far as his (the narrator's) knowledge went, was unfolded, from the time he was first spoken to by Bhimoo Gowda to his dispatch with the news of the completed outrage to the police post at Awakhalli. He told them of the rendezvous in Durga Dèvi's babul kuran, of the burning of the house, of Pandu's death, which led to it ; of the retreat of the dacoits, of the slaughter of the sheep. Bob knew well that Nagoji had done the deed ; now he had evidence, and could act. Nagoji

and the rest had crossed the river, at least so Timma surmised ; his surmise was probably correct. Where but into native territory should the robbers fly ? To action at once. Taking Timma with them, they went off, Duckworth had awoke, and was with the others, and very soon Bhimoo Gowda, Narrayen Kulkarni, and the others, including the koshtis, were arrested and lodged in the chowdi. Timma, alas ! was with them. From the reproachful glances he casts at the wily fouzdar, it seems as if he had hardly expected this. Bhimoo and Narrayen are in a dreadful state of mind. *They* to be arrested ! *they* to be thought capable of harbouring any evil designs against Rudra Gowda ! *they* to be in league with Nagoji Naik ! Goodness gracious ! what an idea ! but the sahibs are as gods ; let them do as they think best, and the much-injured individuals subside. Anant Rao steps delicately, like a pleased cat ; he places the guards ; he will remain for the night at the chowdi ; Bob knows his prisoners are safe. A few more arrangements have to be made ; Rudra Gowda's piebald is requisitioned. Hari making no objection, one of the sowar's horses will do for the other sahib.

Then, with tired bodies, but easy consciences, the Police Superintendent of Lolapur and his assistant seek their impromptu couches spread on the floor of the dharam-sala, and enjoy a well-earned repose.

Up early, bright and early! "Horrid rough business, young 'un, isn't it?" Bob is his kindly old self again, now that he can get to work and have some chance of avenging those poor things close by here, at Gowda-wadi. Ah! their bodies are all ashes now, and have mingled with the waters of Mother Gunga, hurrying away to the vast ocean; just as their souls have been borne away on that mightier river, Death, to the vaster, infinitely vaster, ocean, Eternity. First, are the prisoners all safe? Never a doubt of that; catch Anant Rao letting a mother's son of them escape! Does not that inspectorship seem nearer, ever nearer to the ambitious officer's mind's eye? There were seventeen prisoners in all—rather a close fit in the chowdi—therefore, Timma was accommodated on the ground outside. The supply of handcuffs, too, had run short, so the men were mostly secured with ropes, and withes, and looked sufficiently uncomfortable. The Avakhali Naik and six con-

stables, with loaded muskets and fixed bayonets, were told off on escort duty, and presently the whole lot are *en route* for Muffinapur to try how they like the quarters provided for law-breakers there.

And now Rudra's horse is caparisoned once more with the gay trappings already described, and with much laughter and many protestations, Duckworth mounts it, and the rest of them in their turn set off, but only for Avakhalli. The party consists of Bob, Duckworth, Gainu, Anant Rao, and fourteen men. The sowar is sent off with a note in the vernacular but signed by Bob, to the Jaffirabad police post across the river at Fattehpur, invoking aid from the police there, in pursuit of the notorious dacoit, Nagoji. Arrived at Avakhalli, Bob mounts the other sowar's horse. The sowar himself is left in charge of the post. The river is crossed, the party set their faces in the direction of Fattehpur. The ministers of justice are aroused ; the avenger of blood is on thy trail, oh, Nagoji Naik!

CHAPTER IX.

NAGOJI NAIK'S RETREAT.

FROM the moment that Nagoji's brother, Pandoo, received his death wound, the mind of the robber chief was made up. All idea of plunder was merged in the mighty thirst for vengeance. All those that were in that house were doomed to death, Nagoji's brother should not descend to Hades unaccompanied, he should arrive there attended by a fitting train of victims, worthy satellites of a robber chief. And when his mind was made up, there was no flinching, no wavering. Beyond the first deep sob that burst from him as Pandoo's spirit took flight there was no trace of emotion visible, except, perhaps, that his voice was deeper than usual, his actions a little more incisive. Not at all like the ordinary Hindu's usual behaviour on such occasions; but he was no ordinary Hindu. Brought up in a stern, hard school, the man had per-

force become imbued with Spartan self-control and fortitude ; evidently the lessons had gone home.

The roof had fallen, thundering down, the mocking, triumphant fire demon was still leaping up, exulting in its awful strength ; the last agonising cry of the victims immolated for the satisfaction of the manes of Pandoo had died away ; in fact, his work of revenge was completed when Nagoji turned his attention to the future. Once more the hooting of the owl was heard, as if that bird of ill-omen was rejoicing over the fearful scene, and obedient to the call, Nagoji's own men gathered round him, a rough bier of branches and cumblies was hurriedly constructed, on which the body of Pandoo was laid, and then, silently and solemnly, the men moved off with their sad burden, leaving the wadars the weavers and the rest to their own devices. It was then that the slaughter of the sheep took place, and with this poor substitute for the booty they had looked for, the party broke up. The wadars, on reaching their encampment, struck their temporary shelters, and in their turn vanished, while the weavers slunk back to their huts, hoping against hope that

their absence had not been detected. And so, the Hirehgaon dacoity was completed ; it was now a matter for history.

Silently and swiftly, dead Pandoo was borne along ; his bearers, four stalwart bēders, and many besides, were ready to lend a helping hand should necessity arise. Nagoji walked beside the bier, sullen, speechless ; who can tell the mental conflict that was going on in the strong man's breast ? What human pen attempt to depict the struggle. He was a man of keen, though uneducated intellect, mighty passions, and therefore—the natural outcome of these—large affections. Is it wonderful, then, that a hell was seething within him ? He, so well able to control his actions (humanly speaking), compelled, perforce, as it were, by the iron chain of surrounding circumstances, gross superstition, shameful lust, accursed custom, into the position of the football of Fortune. How the man's whole soul must have gone up in mighty passionate protest to his Maker as depicted in his mind, cruel, unjust, vindictive. He knew no better. How should he ? Durga Dēvi, and such as she, were to him the arbiters of this world's destinies ; struck

down like this, poor Nagoji felt himself impotent against the gods. In other moods, the virile, robust nature of the man revolted against the superstitions of his creed, and said to himself, "Man is his own god; what other can there be to look to?" What other had he to look to? But man, oh, man! how often do you assign to yourself this position of godship! You placed in authority! Man, vain man, attempt to gauge another sentient human being's thoughts by his actions! You have your little pottering weights and scales, your yard measures, and your foot-rules, and all must fall in with these; if not, away with him! we will have none of him! The fellow dares to be original; he will not "kew-tow" to our images, be they brazen or poor pottery; he will have none of our foot-rules and our measuring-tapes. Away with him—such an one is not fit to exist! and the prodigal comes back, tucks his napkin under his chin, and behaves properly ever after. Ah! well for him if he does come back; then he goes along with the other sheep, quite undistinguishable from the rest, head down along the dusty road. No more frisky gambols in green fields, which might perchance land

him in a quagmire; safe home along the dusty road, to the old familiar fold. And, perhaps, to-morrow, the butcher's knife! Never mind, old mutton! it is your sphere in life, what you were intended for. Not to go merrily to your fate, your own way, with a hop a skip and a—squash—— What is this? Here, I am, out of my depth. It is the quagmire that prosy old ewe was always warning me about! Well, well, Nagoji was no sheep. There had been a mistake made in breeding him, and his training had not been good. He was a great deal more like the wild ass of the desert. Your steady, ordinary market-gardener sort of sheep does not fathom him at all; but there is not the slightest doubt that the latter is the more respectable animal; perhaps the former is the more interesting. A wild ass, Nagoji? A very donkey!

Silently, swiftly, dead Pandoo is borne along through the babul kuran, past Durga Dèvi, crouching there grimly in the darkness, on, on, past the trees, on through the fields beyond, Mother Gunga is flowing placidly by. "Come to me, come to me, weary one," she whispers; "what have you, and such as you, to do

in the world? The world will have none of you; come, rest on my bosom, and with me away to the restless, heaving ocean, there deep, deep, deep, in his unfathomable recesses, rest, oh, rest." At the place where Nagoji had stepped ashore the previous evening, a slight halt was made, a few hurried words in Raghoo's ear, and the procession passed on. The misshapen bèder soon found the coracle concealed in the usual spot, and launching it, directed it across the river; here he again concealed it, and then stepping lightly on shore dived into the jungle. Nagoji, with his sad convoy, kept on still for some three miles or more, till at length a ford was reached, and here the whole band crossed the river. They breathed more freely now they were off British territory, they were in the State of Jaffirabad.

The river crossed, a rest was instituted, the bier was reverently laid down on the sand under an overhanging babul bush, while the bearers and the others betook themselves to the river's edge, there to perform those abominably sounding ablutions * com-

* All Anglo-Indians will understand what is meant here; it is advisable to give as wide a berth as possible to a native when he is cleaning his teeth, etc.

mon to people of their stamp. Ahmed got a friend to bathe his wounded shoulder, which was very stiff and sore by this time, and to apply a poultice of neem leaves, freshly plucked from a tree close by ; this done, he approached his leader, prepared to perform the same kind office for his wounded leg, but Nagoji would not permit his hurt to be touched ; wrapped in deep gloom, he had remained seated on the sand close by his dead brother. The soothing hubble-bubble is handed round, and then they once more address themselves to the road.

The country on the south of the Gunga, the side gained by the dacoits, was very different to the tract that they had been passing over hitherto ; rising up directly from the river, the landscape was one succession of low hills, cut up by innumerable water-courses. The hills were of sandstone, bare and stony, the only vegetation consisting of low babul and mimosa bushes, diversified by a few "nim" and "bor" trees standing up defiantly, reminding one somewhat of scarecrows or urchins with tattered clothing and unshorn locks. The early sun shining slantwise threw strange shadows rippling over the undulating

surface which showed here red, there grey, anon a rusty black, and there was a loneliness, a strange look of barrenness, uncared-for-ness, as it were, over the whole scene. Living thing there was none, except that now and again a "chinkara" would be startled out of a hollow, when it would gallop away for a hundred yards or so to some hillock a little higher than the rest, the coign of vantage gained, it would, after gazing at the intruder on its privacy for a moment or two in a manner at once reproachful and inquisitive, melt away and be no more seen.

The road passed on through country of this sort for a mile and a half, till a chain of hills was reached, a chain a little higher and more defined than the surrounding chaos; at the foot of these hills, on the near side of a kind of saddle, or "khind," was the outpost of Fattehpur, a station of the Jaffirabad police. A primitive little village was close by, the inhabitants of which were, for the most part, Gonds, the aborigines of that part of the country. A simple, hardy race of the Dravidian stock, good hunters, but poor agriculturists, their presence here like that of the sâl tree, and the "barra singh," or twelve-tined deer,

which were also found in the vicinity, was a curious physiological puzzle. Search for many miles round the Gond, the "*shorea robusta*," and the twelve-tined deer are conspicuous by their absence. The animal and vegetable products of the north and south of the peninsula, seem to have established their advanced posts here, as it were. The police post was a very sketchy structure, a long low shed much resembling Rustomji Jamsetji's stables at Avakhalli, and close by, about twenty paces away, and a little nearer the gap or pass, was a small stone erection, square in shape, and with a very disreputable dirty thatched roof. The shed served as barracks, stables, everything for the members of the party on guard at the frontier post; while the stone building was the dwelling-house of the commandant. The shed was divided into compartments by bamboo matting, old carpets, ragged old articles of clothing—anything. They did not seem to care much for privacy, these Jaffirabad policemen, and each compartment was teeming with life; half-naked men, wholly naked children, dirty, slatternly looking women; cocks, hens, cats, dogs, were all huddled together, a truly heterogeneous mass, squab-

bling, squalling, crowing, cackling, spitting, swearing, barking. All dirty, horribly dirty, and contented; yes, contented! nay more, positively happy! The horses were kept in the back half of the shed, and they might be heard and smelt, though not actually seen. Surrounding the shed and the commandant's quarters were festering puddles, manure heaps, piles of rotting vegetables, and rubbish of all sorts. There was no sanitary commissioner to be dreaded in Jaffirabad, and yet the poor misguided inhabitants of that benighted state lived contentedly and happily. "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise."

Seated cross-legged on the "ota," or verandah, in front of his house is Rassul Beg, the commandant of the Fattehpur post; poor, proud, and passionate, bigoted and ignorant, he was a very good specimen of the class produced by Moslem tradition engrafted on Hindu superstition and custom. An elderly man, slight, spare figure, hooked nose, flashing dark eyes, and brilliant red beard, moustaches, and whiskers (the whole of these facial ornaments were dyed scarlet), which contrasted curiously with his shaggy white overhanging eyebrows and—his turban being laid

aside—the snow-white “paradise” lock of his shaven skull;* while the ends of his whiskers were carefully collected and tucked round and round his ears. There was no possible doubt about it, Rassul Beg was a most formidable antagonist to meet in battle—at all events, he apparently thought so himself, and evidently wished to stamp the same idea upon the beholder’s mind. Perfectly uneducated, he yet knew a few of the more well-known texts and apothegms of the koran, which he used frequently, and without troubling himself at all as to context; he therefore passed among his followers and compeers for a most holy and learned man—a “sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal”—there are many such as he to be met with on more elevated stages in this world’s restless drama. Rassul Beg had not got much on that morning, a cloth round his waist which left his shaggy breast exposed to view; and apparently he had not much to do, for he was muttering verses from the koran

* Mussalmen shave all the hair on their heads with the exception of one lock or tuft on the crown, which is left long to enable the wearer to be assisted after death by the ministering angels across the bridge, which, spanning “Gehennum,” or hell, admits to Paradise.

as he handled his beads, but evidently in a perfunctory manner; his morning orisons had been performed, these devotions were purely subsidiary and “pour passer le temps.” Up on the brow of the hill there was a wild-looking figure, who, it might be presumed, was doing “sentry-go,” as he had a matchlock beside him, and was remaining there apparently on the look-out—in a very desultory way though.

Presently he gets quite excited; away in the distance there is something moving, seemingly a body of men; there is no fear of anything hostile, all that sort of thing has passed away in these days, at least, in the open daylight, but the excitement of anyone at all passing this way was enough to break up the phlegm of even the apathetic few-ideaed Mahratha. There will be some news of the outside world, at all events—world cut off from the inhabitants of Fattehpur as completely as though they were castaways on a desert island, or the crew and passengers of an East Indiaman in the round-the-Cape voyages’ days. Steadily nearer the knot of moving beings comes on, and at last the sentry thinks the news certain enough for communication to old Rassul Beg.

The old commandant had expected the news. Nagoji and he (the thief and the thief-catcher) ran in a fashion in couples. The worthy old Mussalman kept his eyes tightly closed to all the bèders' misdoings, provided always that he got a small percentage of the dacoit chief's illgotten booty. This Nagoji was careful to contribute, and so secured for himself comparative—up to the present time, indeed, absolute—immunity from the law. Rassul Beg, in fact, knew that Nagoji was on the war-path again, and this in a great measure accounted for his occupation, or no occupation, on this present morning. He had also been very particular that the sentry should be posted that day; just as often as not sentry duty was one of the duties allowed to slide by the easy-going commandant of the frontier post. On hearing, therefore, that a large body of men were approaching, he received the news with calmness, and, directing his informant to return to his post, he himself disappeared into his dwelling. Reappearing presently in full dress, that is, with a respectable-looking red turban on his head, a light-blue linen coat reaching to his knees, embroidered at the neck and wrists with

frayed old lace, and a pair of red and white "pyjamas." This was the good old man's full dress, donned only on great occasions, and it was a signal to the men under his command, who also inducted themselves in garments of different sorts, and presently the garrison of Fattehpur was ready for parade. The women and children ranged themselves in voluble little groups, while the men formed up in some kind of order in front of their quarters, with their doughty leader in front. A wooden chair and a very tattered old carpet were brought forth and solemnly and ostentatiously placed in front of Rassul Beg's residence; and thus the approaching strangers were awaited.

A few moments passed, and then a solitary stranger appeared on the crest of the khind, who, on nearer approach, proved to be no other than Ahmed the Sidi; the wily old commandant noticed immediately that his visitor was wounded, his bandaged shoulder and fatigued look being sufficient evidence of the fact. No one else appeared, and a rather embarrassing pause ensued after the first formal greetings had been interchanged. Ahmed

was evidently ill at ease ; so, dismissing his men, old Rassul Beg led the way into his house, waiving the usual formality of taking his seat in the wooden chair, and giving audience in public. The interior of the house gained, and privacy secured, Ahmed unfolded his tale, at least so much of it as he thought politic to disclose ; he told of Pandoo's death, of his own and his chief's wounds, of the failure of the attack (this to account for the absence of the usual *douceur*) ; but he did not enter into any minute details. Still, he said quite enough to let Rassul Beg know that this time, at all events, fortune had not favoured Nagoji. The commandant was very polite, and so on, it would not have been prudent to have been anything else ; Nagoji and his men could have swallowed up Rassul and his followers with the greatest ease, even had the old mogul's myrmidons been reliable—as they were not—in the event of any disagreement arising. Several of the police were Mahrathas, and what is more, a considerable number of these were *bèders*, Nagoji's own caste-men, and they had a great admiration of and respect for the bold dacoit. So Rassul

Beg was very polite, condoled with Ahmed on his wound, and feigned to be profoundly sorry for the death of Pandoo, and so on, and so on. Ahmed saw clearly through the old man's tone; but he himself was acting the part of a diplomatist, and so with many expressions of esteem and regard for each other, these two types of worldly men parted.

The dacoits encamped under a small clump of "nim" trees on the further side of the hill from the village, on the banks of a small stream, tributary of the river Gunga, and set about preparing their morning meal, and recruiting themselves generally after the fatigues of the preceding night. Pandoo's body was laid down in the shade, and Nagoji, still silent and gloomy, took up his place beside it. He had issued the order to Ahmed which had sent that crafty person to his equally crafty co-religionist, and had then again relapsed into his former sullen mood. While the men were still busy at their cooking, Raghoo arrived. He salaamed to his chief, who acknowledged the salute by a simple nod, but said never a word, and then divesting himself of his upper clothing, the little hunchback was soon as busy as

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the rest in culinary avocations. Hastily preparing some chupatties and a simple vegetable curry, the faithful fellow, before eating anything himself, took some of the food he had prepared to Nagoji, who, touched, perhaps, by this sign of his henchman's devotion, and, also, no doubt, impelled by hunger, for it was several hours since he, or indeed any of the band, had eaten anything, accepted thankfully. His meal finished, he drank copiously of the little stream, and then enveloping himself in his cumbli, he was soon asleep, or, at all events, seemed to be so.

Raghoo attended to his own wants, and then he also lay down, the last of all, and for some time the drowsy god reigned supreme over the whole band. In about an hour, however, Nagoji roused Raghoo, and, his features working convulsively, gave directions for the interment of his brother. Raghoo thereupon went up to the village, and soon returned with two elderly women, who were presently busy preparing poor Pandoo's corpse for the last sad rites; while Raghoo himself, having procured tools, set about digging a grave by the side of the stream, assisted by two of his caste-mates, whom he had woke up for the purpose.

The sun was sinking in the west, the shadows were lengthening out towards the east, when Pandoo was laid to rest. The same stretcher which had conveyed his corpse from Gowda-wadi did duty for his bier, and on this the body was placed in a sitting position, the face painted vermilion, while the garments were the same as in life, the cloth on the head turban fashion, and the cumbli disposed around the body. Again four bèders were the bearers, and very soon the earthly covering of poor Pandoo's spirit was returned to mother earth—"ashes to ashes, dust to dust." In front of the body, on its way to the grave, a brass plate filled with burning gum, obtained from the "*Boswellia thurifera*," filling the air with its fragrance, was borne by Raghoo. Behind followed Nagoji in his capacity as chief mourner, and after him came the rest of the bèders (of the village as well as of the band), while behind them again walked the rest of Nagoji's followers, anxious to pay respect to the remains of their chief's brother.

"And a band

Of stern in heart, and strong in hand,
Came winding down beside the wave
To lay the red chief in his grave."

The grave filled in, and large stones placed upon it; every one retired, leaving Nagoji alone with his sorrow; By the time everything was completed, it was nearly dark, so Nagoji determined to spend the night in the spot where they were, and orders were given accordingly. Twinkling lights from numerous fires soon dotted the ground near the group of nim trees, the villagers consorted freely with the robbers, but no song or jest was heard. Pandoo's death bore heavily on them all, and each had the individual disappointment of having returned from their free-booting expedition empty-handed.

CHAPTER X.

MAHADROOG.

THE dacoits were in no hurry to move on, seemingly, the next day; all were more or less fatigued, and were glad of a rest. The two wounded men felt stiff and uncomfortable, and at length Nagoji permitted Raghoo to look to his hurt; he bathed it carefully and tenderly with warm water, and applied the stereotyped poultice of nim leaves; the relief to the wounded man being very great. The coagulated blood, the dirt engendered by the long walk, independently of the wound itself, made the leg very painful, and the dressing completed, Nagoji lay back, and this time there was no doubt that he did have a good refreshing sleep. The men mixed with the villagers, and very soon all the details of the Gowda-wadi dacoity were widely known. Rassul Beg was more than ever convinced of the iniquity of Nagoji's

ways, and more than ever determined to sever all connection with him, at all events till he made another lucky haul.

How *does* news travel so fast? Is it carried by the wind? Do the leaves rustle it to each other? Do the birds sound it softly into one another's ears? Who can tell? But news, especially in India, flies fast; that strange power, yclept "bazaar gup,"* hath wings faster than the speedy telegraph. How is it? Who can tell? Anyway there is a whisper, "The police sahib has come to Hirehgaon." "The police are pursuing Nagoji and his men, better have nothing to do with them." "The Rani-sahib has heard of Rudra Gowda's death, and the whole of the British army is coming to Fattehpur," etc., etc. Ahmed at last hears the whisper, and, guiltily-fearful, commences to make enquires. "How was it?" "Oh Luxmi Bai told me." "How did you hear it?" "They were talking at the well." Ahmed is uneasy; Rassul Beg is by no means cordial. "We had better

* Literally the news of the market. It is wonderful how fast intelligence of a certain sort travels, not only in India but everywhere. Rumour is hundred-tongued, and is possessed of the seven-leagued boots of the fairy tale.

get out of this—lie by till the storm blows over,” and then he wakes Nagoji, and tells him of the vague, disquieting rumour. Nagoji, awoke much refreshed, the pain of his wound greatly assuaged, and his grief in some degree lessened ; the news of possible danger aroused his instinct of self-preservation, and he was once more the keen, resolute man, fruitful in resource, daring in action. His mind was soon made up ; giving orders for his men to collect, he ate a hasty meal, and then they set off once more.

Nagoji had not been near Rassul Beg, the time-serving Mussulman police officer ; he despised and overlooked the man, did not trouble himself in the least about him, and this line of conduct confirmed the old mogul in his intention of playing the bèder false, should the opportunity for doing so arise. Nagoji successful had been a source of income to him, Nagoji unsuccessful should be his stepping-stone to something higher ; 'twas thus that the old man's musings ran. After proceeding for about a mile, the dacoit leader gathered his men around him, and told them of what had fallen from Ahmed (which was no news to them). He bade them scatter

for the present, and directed them to make the best of their way, either individually or in small parties of two or three, to Mahadroog, a hill-fort distant about seven miles from where they were, ordering them so to time their arrival as to reach the place after night-fall ; the band accordingly scattered, and soon Nagoji was left with only Ahmed and Raghoo as his attendants.

Mahadroog was the highest point in a range of hills running south of the chain in which Fattehpur was situated. This second chain of hills attained a much greater altitude than the first chain, while the country between the two ranges was of the same nature as that characterising the tract around Fattehpur; bare, barren, a howling wilderness, it seemed like the end of the world ; only a few hamlets were scattered about here and there, inhabited principally by Gonds. In the hollows scanty crops of "ragi" or "nachni" (*eleusine corocana*) were raised, trees were conspicuous by their absence, only a few stunted specimens breaking the monotony of stony squalor ; in fact, a desolation of desolation ; waterless, cheerless, accursed. Across this desert, Nagoji and his two companions

pursued their way, avoiding the habitations of men. Mahadroog was a secure refuge, never yet had it failed them; but still they (the three men) were well-known on this side of the Gunga, and, taking all things into consideration, it was better to be on the safe side of caution. So on, on, on, toiling on through the simmering plain, steaming in October's heat,* waterless, cheerless, accursed, avoiding the haunts of man, like wild beasts of prey the three men, two of whom are wounded, plod wearily on, till at length the base of the great hill (it stands nearly a thousand feet above the level of the surrounding country) is gained. Then seeking a bubbling spring they wot of, they throw themselves on the ground beside it, drink, make a frugal meal of parched rice and gram (*kurumuri*) and rest.

Above them towers the huge mass of Mahadroog (lit., the large fort or hill). At the foot it is buttressed as it were by rolling slopes ever sinking and rising; these slopes are bare on their salient parts, in the hollows a

* May and October are ordinarily the hottest months in the Indian year. May's heat is dry and burning, October's moist and stifling.

fair amount of tree growth exists, such trees as the "temru" (*diospyros montana*), the "bhawa" (*cassia fistula*), and the "aonli" (*phyllanthus, emblica*) being found in moderate abundance, while a thick undergrowth of "tarwad" (*cassia auriculata*) and grass forms quite a tangle and a convenient resting-place for cats, hares, etc. Ascending a little higher, the hill gets perfectly bare, standing out in grim nakedness, seamed by innumerable little gullies. At convenient places running along ledges, and such coigns of vantage, are traces of primitive fortifications, low walls rudely constructed of large stones. Up at the top of the hill there are a few black-wood trees (*dalbergia sissu*) peering above the walls, still intact, of an old hill fort. Consult tradition, and you will find that the place is an old Pindari stronghold, now it is the hiding-place of their degenerate successors the dacoits.

It was very nearly sunset when the naik and his two companions commenced the ascent of Mahadroog; they had been joined at intervals by several more of the band, and it was a party of some twelve or fifteen who breasted the incline. The climb was not a very

stiff one, a narrow, rugged pathway ever ascending, but gradually and steadily ; by the time the summit was reached, the pale beams of the young moon had overcome the declining radiance of the sun, and shed a soft light over the scene. A low-browed, heavy gateway gave admission to the fort, square in shape and surrounded by massive walls ; in the centre was a small Lingayet temple, with the usual "buswa," or stone image of a bull in front, and inside, the "Lingum," the symbol of the Lingayet object of worship. Some twelve or fifteen "sisoo" trees are scattered about, while the grass grows tall and rank in patches, in some places reaching as high as a man's head. Along one side of the fort, and nestling under the wall, are a succession of small chambers made of slabs of stone—places of shelter for priest and devotees in the olden times, when pilgrims used to visit the shrine. Arrived at the summit, most of the men threw themselves down in front of the entrance to take a breather after the long pull ; but two or three, among whom were Raghoo, disappeared inside, and were soon busy cooking. Some caution had to be observed about this, as it was not desirable that signs of habi-

tation should be visible to the outside world, so small fires were kindled in the corners of the above-mentioned cells;—tarwad bushes close at hand supplied the fuel—of water there was an abundant and wholesome supply from a spring that emerged from the ground close by the buswa. The men were dispirited and tired, and lay about listlessly ; they were joined from time to time by more climbers from below, and presently, having satisfied their hunger, all were asleep except two, who were told off to do duty as watchers.

Next morning, almost exactly at the same time as the band of dacoits had the previous day broken away from their temporary encampment near the police post, the sowar emissary of the British “sirkar” (Anglicé Government) dashed at full speed up the road leading from Avakhalli, past the shed accommodating those vigilant guardians of the public peace, the Fattehpur police-guard, scattering right and left dirty urchins, barking dogs, and scandalised hens, and pulled up with a jerk which brought his horse on to its haunches, in front of the commandant’s quarters. Rassul Beg, who was inside at the time, came to the

door on hearing the commotion, and was thrown into a fearful state of mind on seeing the cause of it ; here was a pretty kettle of fish ! Here was he already called upon to act one way or the other. “ How very rapid these doubly accursed dogs of Feringhis are in their actions ! ” This was what the old fellow thought ; he had expected that at least another week must elapse before he would be called upon to commit himself in any way—and some straw be thrown up to show in which direction the wind blew—instead of that, here was this swine of Egypt, this sowar, at the door, looking altogether too alert and too business-like. “ The curse of the prophet on him,” mutters Rassul Beg in his beard ; however, he takes the missive the sowar hands to him, puts on his spectacles, which are perfectly useless as aids to sight to himself or to anybody else, but they look learned, which is the great thing, calls for his chair in a loud voice, and prepares to read the despatch. A happy thought strikes him, he takes off his spectacles, and wipes them carefully while he questions the sowar. “ This letter is addressed to me ? Ji ha, Hazrut.” “ Oh yes, great sir. That is all right, then.” He opens it, and

pretends to read it, though unable, really, to decipher a single word. The pantomime gone through, the wily old man proceeds to pump the messenger (who was a Mahratha, although he had answered the commandant in Hindustani). He asks him to dismount ; his horse is made over to an attendant, and very soon the old man knows all that the sowar is able to tell him. The police sahib himself is coming—two sahibs—and ever so many of the British police, with the great Anant Rao himself at their head. Anant Rao ! oh well, there is no use in trying to humbug him ! Rassul Beg begins to feel very virtuous ; he thinks that the cause of justice must be upheld at all costs. After all, Nagoji was a great nuisance, and lately he had not been subscribing so very much ; past benefits are soon forgotten ; they wane very rapidly under the microscope of time. Ah well, Nagoji, it is the way of the world ! who are you that you should complain ? The sowar is taken away, and hospitably entertained ; a Fattehpur fowl is sacrificed on the altar of his appetite ; the sowar unbends, he takes off his sword-belt, he is affable, a child might play with him. Rassul Beg and the rest also appease their hunger,

and then once more preparations are made for the reception of strangers. The men do their very best to smarten themselves ; Rassul Beg, aided by a looking-glass which is very nearly as large as the palm of a man's hand, combs out his beard and whiskers, and carefully replaces them round and round his ears ; and thus he and his suit await the advent of the British forces.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, of the armed men ; Anderson and young Duckworth at their head. Bob is mounted on a grey, one of the Avakhalli sowar's animals, Roman-nosed and ragged hipped. Duckworth is riding Rudra Gowda's piebald. Bob is quite himself again, laughing and joking with the young 'un. Rassul Beg takes a dislike to him on the spot, so gallant, so frank, so bold he looks with his long yellow beard and fearless blue eyes ; and then, close by, a little to the rear, on his ambling pony, is little Anant Rao, demure but wide-awake. The old Mogul feels very uncomfortable.

The two sahibs, merely saluting the commandant, rode on to the nim trees beyond the gap, and there throwing themselves off their steeds, they came

to a halt. Curious coincidence ; varied occupants. The dacoits had been there but a very little while before ; now the British police. There is Pandoo's grave close by ; relics of the late tenants are still visible. Anderson and Duckworth don't notice this ; Anant Rao does though. "The scent is warm," thinks he to himself. Each one betakes himself to as shady a place as possible, refreshes the inner man, and makes himself, as comfortable as circumstances will permit. Anant Rao goes to the village, gets milk, and then getting away by himself some little distance, on the side of the stream, he makes a frugal repast off "dèshmi" (bread cooked in milk), which he produces from his bag, first carefully performing his ablutions. A Brahmin, he observes ceremonial strictly.* Then they all lie down to rest with the exception of the indefatigable little chief-constable, who soon finds his way back to Fattehpur, and presently enters into conversation

* The ceremonial observed by a strictly orthodox high-caste Hindu is very elaborate, and in many ways it strikingly resembles the formality enjoined by the Mosaic law. No Pharisee could be more particular about cleaning "the outside of the cup and platter" than is a Brahmin of the old school to-day.

with Rassul Beg. He is very untiring, this little Bramin. Oh, Nagoji Naik. The quick-witted Hindu soon got round the few-ideaed mogul, and extracted everything from him. "Nagoji Naik been committing a dacoity, has he? Well, well, I always had my suspicions of him." "Robbed Rudra Gowda! burned down his house, and roasted all his relations! By the beard of Mahomed, would I had known of it! He was here but yesterday, encamped under those very nim trees. I would have swallowed him up, made mincemeat of him and his ruffianly crew. I and my gallant men; true sons of the Raja of Jaffirabad." He twirls his moustachios, his eyes glare, he is very angry at having been thus outwitted by an infidel. Anant Rao sympathises with him. "Let us make common cause. The British sirkar cannot allow their faithful subjects to be treated in this way. The British sirkar is very powerful; it is also very generous, oh, Rassul Beg! Is there any clue to Nagoji's probable place of retreat?" Rassul Beg does not know at all; but he will make enquiries. He will pay his respects to the superintending sahib presently, if permitted to do so; and Anant Rao departs

well satisfied. He has succeeded in putting salt on *that* old bird's tail, at all events, and he goes straight-way and tells Bob everything, and this gentleman feels well satisfied also. Things are going nicely. Rassul Beg will give valuable information.

The burning heat of day is beginning to tone down slightly. It is past three o'clock when an emissary from Rassul Beg arrives and craves an audience for that personage. Permission is at once accorded, and presently the commandant arrives escorted by half a dozen of his men, armed and got up for the occasion. Rassul Beg has determined to throw in his lot with the powerful and generous British "Raj." (Rassul Beg could have had but few dealings with the said "Raj." I am afraid that he was credulous). He tells Anderson that he has, he thinks, found out Nagoji Naik's place of retreat. "'Tis a place called Mahadroog ; not very far from here," and so on. I suppose he thought that he was deceiving his interrogators as to the nature of his relations with Nagoji. Anyway, they were perfectly satisfied with the information supplied to them. They accepted the proffered services of two sowars

of the post, and also of four "Gonds" from the village, the latter to act as guides. Soon the party, reinforced by these additions, passed out of sight of Fattehpur, taking the road for Mahadroog. Did no one think of sending you word of warning, or giving thee friendly hint, oh, Nagoji Naik? Not one! not one! It is the way of the world, Nagoji; take what you can get; never help a fellow when he is down. He helped you once, did he? Ah, yes, the more fool he; but that is no reason why you should help him now.

All day watch and ward had been kept up there at Mahadroog. No pursuit then; hug not thyself with too vain hopes. "The wheels of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small."

When morning came that day, Nagoji found that his band had sensibly diminished; not more than thirty had rallied to the rendezvous. The rats are leaving the sinking ship. By evening there were a few more desertions, but Nagoji and his more staunch adherents were beginning to breathe more freely now; time was what they wanted. To-morrow they would scatter, and better luck next time. So, when the

second night overtook the band of marauders, they were possessed of livelier spirits and lighter hearts than before.

The moon is again flooding hill and valley, touching the howling wilderness with fairy wand, and turning everything it touches into one vast study in gold and silver and ebony ; and through this enchanted scene the avengers of blood are pressing on, drawing nearer, ever nearer to their prey. The moon is just setting as Anderson and his followers reach the spring at the foot of the great hill. It is too late to do anything more that night, so the wearied men and horses stop and rest. The dark mantle of night descends and shrouds everything in impenetrable gloom ; and high up there the stars are twinkling down impartially on pursuers and pursued, passing on in stately march to unheard music ringing faintly away there—*where* is it ? *But it is there !*

CHAPTER XI.

FULL CRY.

HALF-PAST four. Anant Rao has a watch, and punctually to the minute he wakes his chief? It is still quite dark, but it is, nevertheless, time to be moving. No fires can be lit, the men must eat what they can get. Then one of the sowars, with a Gond to show him the way, is sent to the further side of the hill; another sowar, with a Gond also, is posted on a spur, to keep a look-out; the third horseman (the British sowar, who was picked up at Fattehpur) was left behind with a policeman to look after the horses, and impedimenta generally, and then Anderson and Duckworth, placing themselves at the head of their men, the two remaining Gonds acting as guides, commenced the ascent. In the robber camp they were early astir too, Nagoji had determined upon descending from his hiding-place, and scattering his men for the present.

Up the hill in single file the attacking party press on in dead silence. Young Duckworth is nearly wild with excitement, his head is fit to burst, there is a singing in his ears. Here comes the dawn, stealing up quietly but ever steadily; it is wonderful how rapidly the light overspreads everything; as swiftly as the daylight dies, so rapidly does it revive. Before three-fourths of the ascent has been covered, the assailants might be seen from the fort. Ah! they *are* seen, look! there are figures moving up there. On men, on! the hunting instinct is awakened, the thirst for decisive action is aroused; old Bob's eyes are sparkling, as he strides on bravely; the little Hindus and Mussulmen are springing along. Bang! the report reverberates sullenly among the hills. "By Jove! they have opened fire," ejaculates Bob, a little astonished, and he orders his men into open order; they cannot very well miss the way now. Again, this time the bullet goes by with a ping, long humming; they are within range now; again! Anant Rao leaps high into the air, and then falls forward flat upon his face with arms extending widely; there is a hole in the dark blue coat, when they turn him over, with a dark red stain

around it ; dead, stone dead. No inspectorship for thee, poor Anant Rao. Bob's eyes are very savage again. on, men! they are a little disconcerted, these police men ; the work is sterner than what they are used to ; but still they have fair pluck, and are being led straight and unflinchingly, so on they go. Bob sees a dark figure just above the gateway, they are near it now ; he seizes a musket from a policeman near him, and fires. The figure gives a wild stagger, then falls heavily back, behind the wall. It is Ahmed the Sidi ; that poor baby's death is avenged then. "We are near now—steady, steady, as the men close in for the final rush ; it is made. Duckworth, who is young and fleet of foot, is the first inside ; the fort is empty ! no human being is visible, save yon African, sobbing his life away in convulsive gasps.

They are all rather bewildered, and Bob, fearing an ambush, calls the young 'un back, while the whole body of men hang about at the gateway, stealing curiously in step by step ; cautiously they feel their way, but no, not a soul ! Then, like a flash an underground passage—! the inspiration darts into Bob's mind ; *that* accounts for their daring, then. "Up, men, some of you, on to the

walls!" Gainu is up like a cat, what on earth is the sahib going to do now? Then Bob tells them of his surmise, and adjures them to keep a sharp look-out. The Gonds *have* heard of something of the sort, and very soon every available man is looking for the entrance, but they cannot find anything like it; Bob's temper is giving way rapidly. Nagoji escaped again! It is too bad; there seems to be something uncanny about him; he seems fated not to be caught. Ha! Gainu sees something; he is gesticulating wildly. Bob swings himself on to the wall near him, and looks in the same direction as his look-out. The sowar sent to the further side of the hill is galloping hard—what for? Puff! a little cloud of white smoke; the horse goes away faster than ever—riderless. Bang! it comes up faintly, heavily, reluctantly, as it were. "By Heavens! they will get away." The men are got together sharp, and then off at a double; in the direction of that little puff of white smoke they go. Everyone is excited now; no thought of hanging back; at least not till closer quarters are arrived at. Bob is very keen too, no one more so; but he is too old a hand to let the men escape from his control.

“Steady, men, steady!” and if he does call the young’ un to account rather sharply, it is not to be wondered at ; there is more than a silver cup at stake—men’s lives, the safe guarding of property, the vindication of the majesty of the law and the fulfilment of the demands of justice are involved ; down the hill now at a steady double, and here comes the other sowar, the man who was posted on the spur ; he tells them that the dacoits have broken cover near the foot of the hill ; it was a very good move, the posting of the vedettes. Presently they come on the first sowar, not very much hurt ; the bullet has cut the upper part of his arm but slightly ; the shock, however, unexpected as it was, had been sufficient to unseat him. He corroborates his comrade’s story ; seeing some men skulking along, he had galloped towards them, and a pretty reception they had given him. A narrow escape, my brave sowar, a tale wherewith to regale the ears of thy grandchildren in the days that are coming. Soon the pursuers see the enemy, three or four of them ; but they are a long way off, have got a very long start. “On, men, on !” Duckworth begins getting to the front again ; all very well for you, young

'un, but your chief carries weight. "Steady there, steady. Halloa ! here are some more !—nearer." Bob is just going to give the word to fire, when close by, not more than twenty-five yards away, one, two, three men emerge from the ground apparently, and at once begin trying their level best to do even time. "Stop ! or you are dead men." At the shout they turn, see their pursuers almost on them—one of the said pursuers being mounted too, and straightway, incontinently, like shot rabbits, over they go, and are soon secured ; two more appear, and are also caught, and another pops his head round a large rock, but seeing an unlooked-for addition to the company, promptly withdraws it again ; not in time, however, for he has been seen, and very soon the ministers of justice are surrounding a small hole, large enough to admit of the passage of a man's body, very cleverly concealed between two rocks. Here is the outlet to the subterranean passage anyhow ; never mind about the entrance to it now. Gainu is made spokesman, and he proceeds to tell all and any who may be in that passage, that the entrance up above, in the fort, has been discovered, that the sahib-logue know all about

it, and consequently that six of the largest and most ferocious English dogs procurable from the "ghora-logue" (soldiers) in Lolapur, have been turned in thereat—*i.e.* the upper entrance, to the said secret passage—and therefore his advice to them, given perfectly disinterestedly, is, that if they value the calves of their legs and other tender portions of their anatomies, they had better bundle out sharp and get under the protection of the sahib-logue, who alone are able to keep the dogs in order, &c., &c. Bob was struck dumb with admiration; he knew something of the naik's talents as a romancer; but this was genius of no mean order, it was sublime. Charmed by the winning and persuasive oratory of the worthy Gainu, seven objects came slowly forth, one after the other, and straightway prostrated themselves at *somebody's* feet—Mr. Anderson's and Duckworth's, from choice, but, failing them, anybody would do. Two licked the dust (metaphorically) off Gainu's boots; he took it as if it were a matter of everyday occurrence. The naik had that day "done a deed of daring, had been per-

illed but by few," he had put his head in at that hole, and had told lies as fast as a dog can trot, though his brains might have been blown out at any moment. Had Nagoji been in there, they would have been most assuredly; but he was not, as it happened. He was the first to emerge from the tunnel, of the whole band; it was he who had knocked the sowar over, and he was now far on his way to another hiding-place. It is a terrible disappointment to Mr. Anderson, when he discovers this; however, he has got some of the gang, to question them is the next thing to do before taking any further steps. Four men are sent off to bring up poor Anant Rao's body, which has perforce been left till now on the other side of the hill, on the spot where he fell. Bob and Duckworth light their cheroots, send off for their horses, and discuss the morning's work. Gainu pulls out a bag from his waistband, and commences chewing betel-nut and pan leaves, and soon everyone is enjoying a spell of *dolce far niente*—everyone, that is, but the wretched prisoners; *they* don't look very happy, no one gives them "pan-

supâri," * and some of Gainu's remarks about ropes and gallows, and that sort of thing, seem to them to be superfluous and rather out of place; at all events, the words do not appear to amuse the listeners so much as they do that part of the company who come under the head of pursuers. Of course these remarks are made *sotto voce*, and out of the hearing of the English officers; they would have very speedily put an end to Gainu's ill-timed chaff, had it invaded their ears.

The spot selected by Mr. Anderson for a halting-place was under a few babul and nim trees which grew sparsely by the side of a road, or rather cart-track; it was the direct road from Jaffirabad to Hirehgaon, it wound along the foot of the hills, and crossed them by the spur on the west side of Mahad-roog where the sowar had been posted as a look-out.

* (Pan-leaf, supari betel-nut.) The nut of the betel or areca palm (*areca catechu*) and the leaf (usually) of the piper betel; it is chewed by natives of all classes, is pungent in taste, and is supposed to be a preventive, or rather modifier, of thirst, also a promoter of saliva, to which it imparts a bright red colour. The giving and receiving of "pan-supâri" is regarded as a mark of courtesy and friendliness; it is invariably dispensed to the more distinguished guests at a public ceremony, and its distribution may be taken as conveying a tacit permission to depart.

The country on this, the southern side of the range of hills was much more fertile than was the tract to the north, which had been traversed before reaching the range on that side ; gradually sloping down, the hills were as bare and barren as they were on the opposite exposure. At the foot there was a strip of sandy soil varying from a mile to two miles in width, and covered with low scrub jungle, on the edge of this were green fields, waving luxuriantly, and extending as far as the eye could reach, dotted with clumps of trees which hid villages from view. Naik Gainu was deputed by his chief to sound the prisoners, and see what information could be extracted from them, and then there was nothing for it but to wait patiently till the horses came up.

So time passed, an hour had elapsed, and Anderson and Duckworth were getting impatient, not to say hungry ; the men are all busy cooking,* resting, and generally taking it easy, when at the bend in the

* The amount of food (or, shall we say, alimentary matter?) that natives contrive to carry about with them on their persons is something remarkable ; a little flour, a little ghee (clarified butter), and a chili or two, and the ingredients for their meals are there ; a brass pot is enough to cook in.

road where it swept into view round a projecting hill, a party composed of both equestrians and pedestrians was seen approaching from the Jaffirabad direction. As they came on, they gradually discovered themselves to be sowars and police, a motley and a ragged crew; evidently a Bar force,* thinks Bob. The origin of the term "Bar," in this connection, is lost in antiquity, it has been conjectured that it is a paraphrase of the term "The Devil's Own," a cognomen which has been applied to a gallant corps of volunteers, hailing chiefly from Lincoln's Inn; the suggestion is given for what it is worth. Certainly most decent terrestrial potentates would hesitate before owning to the chiefship of such a following—that is, most Western potentates. Orientals have different ideas, and the climate is hotter in India. At the head of this tag, rag, and bobtail was a very stout, greasy-looking individual on an equally stout and sleek steed; a curious-looking object. Though

* Irregular troops belonging to native princes. The Bar force is very often a splendid body of men, well drilled and well equipped. The Bar force of Mysore, for instance, could take its place side by side with any body of troops in the world, and not suffer by comparison.

it was October, and the sun was well up, he was, all the same, in the orthodox travelling costume of the rural Hindu of repute. A cotton night-cap swathed round and round in the voluminous folds of an exceedingly dirty what-had-been-once-white cloth; the said cloth not only enveloped the head of the wearer, but was bound round over his ears, under his chin, over his mouth, and was finally coiled three or four times round his throat, the ends remaining hanging down his back and nearly reaching to his saddle. His body was clothed with a large scarlet baize cloth—the same material that is used as coverings for office-tables—which was clutched tightly by his right hand, his legs from his knees downward were bare and his feet thrust into the usual native slippers, also red in colour and worked with gold thread. The costumes of his followers defy description, each man was dressed as seemed to him best; nearly all had their heads tied up like that of their leader, and most of the men possessed cumblies.

The party came on unconcernedly enough till they were about fifty yards away from the Lolapur police, when they caught sight of the two sahibs. In-

stantly there was commotion, the body of men pulled up, their leader rolled off his palfrey, and began divesting himself of his outer skin, an example followed by his men, and presently Rao Bahadur Ramchandra Bhagwant, Superintendent of Police, Jaffirabad, advanced to greet his brother superintendent of Lolapur. Mr. Anderson had, by this time, conjectured pretty fairly who the new arrivals were. When he started on his journey to Hirehgaon, Mr. Musprat had sent off an express to the Dewan of the Native State, acquainting him of the fact of the dacoity, expressing the opinion that the perpetrators of the deed would seek shelter in Jaffirabad territory, and (in that event) invoking the aid of the Jaffirabad durbar. A "rider" was added, to the effect that the Police Superintendent of Lolapur was himself on his way to the scene of the crime. The durbar is slow to move; but after many consultations (both public and private), it was determined by the councillors to sacrifice Nagoji—at all events, to make a show of helping the British sirkar. Nagoji is getting rather a nuisance; he might some day loot some of his friends. He is not likely to make any unpleasant disclosures

—if he does, they can be smothered—and then, he may escape again. Why not? He is a wonderful man, is Nagoji; and so, grumbling and unwilling, Ram Rao has had to start off. He almost shed tears that morning when leaving his beloved Jaffirabad. Jaffirabad is only seven miles away, and here are the “sahiblogue!” Goodness gracious me! How energetic they are. Poor Nagoji is in a bad way. When he hears further details, Ram Rao is almost petrified; all this to have taken place while he and his colleagues have been deliberating.

The horses and the tiffin basket, &c., arrive. The store of good things provided by Mrs. Anderson has run wofully low. Gainu manufactures some chupatties for the two gentlemen; they form the main item of the meal. Duckworth quite revels in it all; he may yet have to undergo greater hardships than this; it will do the boy good.

The meal is hardly over when, “with measured step and slow,” the four Mahratha policemen who were sent off to bring in Anant Rao’s body are seen descending the hill, bearing their melancholy burthen. At the sight, poor Ram Rao’s agitation is extreme;

oh for some valid excuse to get away ! “ Nagoji Naik is an incarnate fiend. If it ever comes to his ears that I have even attempted to assist in his pursuit, he will have my blood ! ” If Ram Rao could only get cholera now ! not the real article, you know (ye Heavens forefend !)—but a tolerably colourable imitation of it. If he were back in Jaffirabad, he could easily hear of the death of his grandmother, or a maternal aunt, or even—really it would be justifiable, under existing circumstances—he might compass the death of his brother on paper—but here there was no escape ; these terrible sahibs do not seem to be the least bit frightened ; even the look in that big sahib’s eyes appals the unfortunate Brahmin ; he won’t give up the chase in a hurry. Pray Bhagwan he may catch Nagoji—even Nagoji might be afraid of *him*. If Nagoji does get away, then Ram Rao will have a bad time of it ; so he cogitates between the devil and the deep sea, as it were.

However, there was no help for it, “ a live dog is better ” (or *worse*, as the case may be !) “ than a dead lion, any day of the week.” In some such manner argued the worthy Ram Rao inwardly. Bob doing

duty as live dog and Nagoji as dead lion for the nonce—the prisoners are handed over formally to the Jaffirabad police, the British contingent assisting in their safe custody—it was no part of Bob's designs to let them slip quite out of his keeping, and presently the two sahibs are left comparatively alone ; the rest of the party betaking themselves to a well a little distance off, ostensibly to let the new arrivals pull themselves together a little.

Bob has taken the measure of his new colleague at a glance almost ; he knew him by reputation well enough, and therefore personal observation soon confirmed what rumour had hinted at. “ He is no good ; must be got out of the way,” he says to his assistant, and then shouts for a sepoy, whom he tells, when he presents himself, to give his salaams to the Rao Sahib. Ram Rao soon appears, whereon Bob enters into the question of poor Anant Rao's obsequies. Anant Rao being a Brahmin, it is needful that he should be treated with proper ceremony, and with the usual forms attendant upon the demise of a person of his caste and standing. Ram Rao jumps eagerly at the bait, being the only Brahmin present,

he must see to things himself, and soon, much to his own and Bob's relief, he departs with Anant Rao's body, borne as before, for a large village about two miles away, handing over charge of his party to his second in command, a truculent-looking Mohamedan, possessed, no doubt, of less than half of his chief's astuteness, but endowed with double his courage. Ram Rao well away on his mournful errand, Mr. Anderson casually remarks to Cassim Aga, the follower of the prophet aforesaid, that very probably *some* if not *all* of the prisoners know of Nagoji's present hiding-place, and it would redound greatly to his, the Aga's, credit could he only obtain this information from them. A brief "Ji-ha, Sahib," was the only reply vouchsafed by the worthy lieutenant, as saluting, he departed. Bob sank back to the enjoyment of his cheroot with a satisfied air: "He is a new broom anxious to succeed, not over particular. I should say; t'other fellow was in a blue funk; we are well quit of him;" he remarks sententiously to young Duckworth, who assents in a vague sort of way.

Presently sounds are heard as from the direction of the well, the people giving them utterance; whoever

they are, they do not seem to be enjoying themselves much. The young 'un springs to his feet : "What on earth is that?" "Oh, nothing," murmurs Bob, sleepily ; "some of those fellows singing, I fancy." Duckworth thinks it is curious melody ; but, then, the natives of India *do* have strange ideas about music : it is odd enough in Lolapur ; out here in the districts the people are wilder, not so well-educated, more primitive, he conjectures. An ear-splitting yell, "Oh, I say!" "Shut up," says Bob, rather snappishly ; "they are all right." He lights another cheroot. Duckworth is no fool ; he gazes in a questioning kind of way at his companion, who meets his look with a stony glare, and then he lights a cheroot himself. "They may *sing* till all is blue, for all I care," the lad mutters to himself ; "old Bob knows what he is about." In another half-hour or so Cassim Aga reappears, and with him Gainu, who looks thoroughly happy and well-pleased. They report that they have interrogated the prisoners, and it would appear from their replies, that it is highly probable that Nagoji has made for Walpè, a small village in the hills, about six miles distant. That is enough : Bob is active once more ; the prisoners are

sent off to Jaffirabad with the Jaffirabad police as escort : four of the Lolapur men go with them, and Bob, taking these on one side, tells them very emphatically that if any one escapes, they, his hearers, had better look out for squalls. Cassim Aga, and four of his men, whom he specially selects, together with a couple of the Jaffirabadi sowars, are added to the Lolapur party ; the forces divide, the Jaffirabad lot move back, with the prisoners, in the direction in which they came, while the Lolapur men with their reinforcement strike eastward by a track that winds along the foot of the hills. In full cry now ! Nagoji is not very far ahead ; he is wounded, the sahibs know. If the information they have received is correct, they ought to run their fox to earth very soon.

CHAPTER XII.

RUN INTO.

THE advent of the police took Nagoji and his band of desperadoes by surprise. It was not by any means the first time that the naik had had to flee before the myrmidons of the law, and he knew that this last escapade of his was the most serious one that he had hitherto indulged in, but he was not prepared for such unexampled promptitude as this, and, besides, he had placed undue reliance on the secrecy and inaccessibility of his place of refuge. He knew intuitively that he had been betrayed, he had not much difficulty in settling in his own mind that Rassul Beg was his betrayer, and he registered a bitter vow of vengeance against that gallant warrior. The naik was a man of resource and indomitable courage, and these qualities did not fail him now that the pinch had come. The band

were all collected ready to make their exodus from the fort, when they were surprised in the manner described ; in a few moments, after convincing themselves of the identity of the party coming up the hill, the entrance to a secret passage, cut through the hill and emerging on the plain below, was laid bare, and very soon the dacoits were streaming through it. The assailants were so near that Nagoji deemed offensive measures necessary also, so, while the rest were making good their retreat, he, Ahmed, and Raghoo mounted the wall near the gateway and opened fire on their foes, in the hope of delaying their advance. It was Nagoji himself who fired the shot that laid Anant Rao low, and the three men, taking advantage of the momentary confusion that ensued on his fall, were preparing to evacuate their position, when Ahmed was struck down ; Nagoji, seeing that the enemy were in earnest, and that there was no time to lose, then made good his escape also with Raghoo, leaving Ahmed, who they saw was mortally wounded, on the ground. Nagoji himself carefully replaced the stone which covered the entrance to the passage, thus gaining for himself and his followers a brief

breathing space ; in fact, had it not been for Bob's precaution in placing his mounted men, it is probable that the gang would have got away scot-free after all.

Freed of the sowar, Nagoji and his immediate followers made off as fast as they could ; after proceeding for some half mile or so, Nagoji and the faithful Raghoo detached themselves from the rest, and striking eastwards, made for the small village of Walpè, a hamlet inhabited principally by Gonds, nestling at the foot of the hills ; a quiet sequestered spot where Nagoji calculated upon obtaining temporary shelter and safety. It was true it was only six miles distant, but it was out of the way, and the naik's wounded leg was paining him, and thus his movements were in some degree hampered. Arrived at Walpè, where the men were well known, a good meal was supplied to them, and an old Gond woman, learned in the lore of the Hakim, bound up and plaistered the naik's hurt with simple herbs of healing qualities, then the two bèders betook themselves to a building near the village where they were wont to locate themselves when on their visits to the place. Raghoo, refreshed by his meal, was sent on

to Tallehgaon, Nagoji's place of residence, with instructions to warn his (Nagoji's) wife, and to remove her and sundry articles of value to a spot still farther remote from the boundary of British territory ; this done, Nagoji, thoroughly wearied out, wrapped himself in his cumbli, and lay down to sleep.

The place selected by the Bèder Naik for his siesta was a little "dharamsala" (rest house set apart for the convenience of travellers) a square enclosure with sloping roofs on all four sides under which shelter was obtainable, while the central portion, which was unroofed, served as a tethering-ground for animals, etc. The only means of egress or ingress was a small swinging gate in the front wall.

While the dacoit chief was thus recuperating his exhausted energies, his pursuers were following him up untiringly and unrelentingly. It is a hot October day, the sun strikes down ruthlessly on the little band of policemen, as, headed by the two Englishmen on their borrowed steeds, they plod on steadily. The road keeps close along the foot of the hills, a sandy, stony track very trying to the feet both of men and animals ; numerous little streams are con-

tinually met with, the water in which is very grateful and cooling both to taste and touch ; all around the moisture drawn up from the damp earth by the action of the heat of the sun, is dancing and steaming like vapour given off from a hot bath. Hardly a cloud in the sky, a few white cream-cheesey ones are to be seen here and there—mostly however low down on the horizon ; not a breath of wind ; a feeble twitter from a bird, at intervals, and now and then a crow calls out gaspingly (a source of malicious enjoyment to the hearer, for those crows *are* reprobates). The perspiration is pouring down the men literally in streams, Bob cannot smoke even, it takes him all his time to manage to breathe ; but on, on, on, with fixed purpose and dogged determination the little band presses, not very fast, certainly, but steadily, without halt or pause. A man dropping out to drink water has to make up leeway, no stay is made ; and so after a tramp of two hours, the village of Walpè, the goal, comes in sight. A collection of miserable little huts, thatched with grass and the leaves of the palas (*butea frondosa*) nestling down at the foot of the bare, stony hills, with an indescribable air of squalor and desolation

about it. The dharamsala looks quite splendid by contrast with its surroundings. The village sighted, the men brighten up; a halt is called, and the two European officers dismount. The object to be obtained is to cut off escape to the plains, and they have arrived at a good time for effecting a surprise; nothing living is to be seen, except a few cattle lazily cropping the grass—they make much of it, poor things; it is the only time in the year that they get anything succulent and toothsome to eat. Bob selects eight of his men whom he knows as good shikarries and trackers, and gives them hurried directions to post themselves on places of vantage commanding all the various exits from the village. The little party move off at once, and, after giving them what is considered sufficient time to post themselves, the rest of the force march straight on the village, taking the four Fattehpur Gonds with them. Swiftly and silently they swoop down on the village, and reach it unperceived, the surprise being complete. The first to see them is a Gond woman, and she at once takes to flight down the small street of huts; her passage rouses the other inhabitants, and preparations for a retreat are

immediately made on all sides. It is to be presumed that the rustic fair ones anticipated another rape of the Sabines on a small scale; it is to be hoped, for the sake of the old Romans, that their captures were more charming than the Walpè enslavers. Still in those ancient days the old Romans had very simple tastes, and were easily satisfied, it was not till long after the famous raid that they became fastidious, so perhaps the Sabine Helens and the Walpè Venuses might have taken rank side by side in the opinion of those bygone connoisseurs of female beauty. The Fattehpur Gonds are ordered to the front and their appearance somewhat calms the apprehensions of the startled aborigines. The men are got hold of, the patel, a Mahratha by caste, is called, and very soon Mr. Anderson is in possession of the intelligence that the redoubtable Nagoji is safe in the dharamsala. Very little noise has been made, the police had been enjoined to observe the strictest silence, and fortunately also, the villagers had made no outcry; these wild people, scarcely less wild than their immediate neighbours the denizens of the jungles, were accustomed to silence and swiftness in their movements,

so it came to pass that the village was occupied noiselessly, an operation which could never have been thus effected in a more civilized part of the country.

The fox is fairly run to earth now ; the next thing to be done is to dig him out ! Quietly, but at the same time rapidly.* Anderson leads on his men, and posts them carefully round the dharamsala. To get at the quarry inside is, however, *the* problem to be solved. Bob does not like storming the fort directly ; he does not wish to be rash, and lose more lives. Yonder robber is a desperate man, he is fighting with the rope round his neck, and he has given proofs of his daring and determination over and over again. The last, the shooting of Anant Rao, was still fresh in the recollection of all. At length, Mr. Anderson called Gainu, and directed him to construct some make-shift ladders of poles cut from trees, the rungs being made of stout branches which were bound to the supports by withies and creepers. The village Gonds' services are requisitioned, and very soon the manufacture of the ladders is in full swing ; till they are finished there is nothing for it but to wait.

Time passed slowly on, each minute lengthening

out seemingly into an hour, the converse of what occurs in active exertion under stirring circumstances, when hours seem compressed into minutes. Young Duckworth could hardly contain himself, he kept continually fidgeting and fretting, urging Gainu and the Gonds on with their task. Gainu was superintending the construction of the ladders.

How it happened is purely a matter for conjecture. What possessed the man, who can tell? Gainu was a brave man naturally, he possessed considerable bodily strength, and he had next to no imagination. Perhaps he was stung by Duckworth's continued urgings as to despatch; perhaps he was elated by the encomiums bestowed upon him by his chief, for his gallantry at the mouth of the secret passage, earlier in the day. Anyway, he presently, while the attention of the others was engrossed by the ladders, stole quietly away, and calmly, though cautiously, made his way to the little gate, the entrance to the dharamsala, and passed inside. The ladder-makers were working in a small nulla, the bank of which cut off their view of the dharamsala. Bob, himself, was seated in the shade of a bush,

smoking, impatient, eager, keeping a careful look-out; yet he also saw not the police naik. The men on guard, by some strange fatality, did not perceive him either, and so, unknown to all, Gainu went on single-handed to "beard the lion in his den," the Douglas in his hall!"

At length, four ladders were ready. The time for action has arrived. "Where is Gainu? Where? Confound the fellow, he will be back presently. Come on!" says Bob, and the ladders are taken up and carried along the sheltering nulla a few yards, in order to effect a flank manœuvre. Nagoji is known to carry arms. One side of the dharamsala is reached. Silently and rapidly a ladder is put up, and the superintendent himself mounts it to reconnoitre. He knew that he was thereby incurring a great risk, but as it was his duty, up he went unflinchingly. The summit of the wall gained, he peered cautiously, and what a sight met his eyes! There, just inside the entrance to the enclosure, lay poor Gainu, with his head nearly severed from his body. Of his assailant no trace could be seen! *This* then was the place poor Gainu had disappeared to. No

coming back presently for him! and Bob thought sadly of the poor wife and the fat little pickaninnies away yonder in Lolapur. Poor Gainu! Bob descends with a heavy heart, and tells his story; and then round the enclosure they go, placing a ladder against each wall. Bob, Duckworth, Cassim Aga, and a policeman ascend them simultaneously. Scarcely does Bob put his head above the wall, than bang! and he pulls it back again smartly. Then all four of the ladder-climbers descend.

Gainu got inside the dharamsala all right, and that was all. While he was still looking for the dacoit chief death overtook him. Nagoji had roused himself from the sleep into which he had fallen after Raghoo's departure, and, much refreshed and rested, was still sitting where he had slept, when he heard a cautious tread approaching. Instantly he was on the alert; unsheathing his sword, he drew near the entrance, and waited by the side of it, all ready for the reception of the intruder. Gainu, incredible as it may appear, advanced a pace or two before halting for his reconnaissance—he had Mr. Anderson's revolver in his hand, that gentleman having handed

it over for him to carry ; and possibly this fact inspired him with undue confidence—before he could use it, however—before, indeed, he had seen Nagoji—that desperado cut him down. Seeing the hated police uniform, Nagoji waited not one moment, and poor Gainu fell without a groan. Hastily seizing the fallen man's revolver and cartridges, the dacoit next looked out of the gate cautiously, and at once perceived that he was in a trap. Well, then, he would die hard ! It was lucky for Mr. Anderson that Nagoji had fired the revolver at him ; had he used his gun, the police superintendent's name would have been added to the list of casualties. The bèder had not had any revolver practice, and did not therefore know of the playful little kick which that weapon is wont to indulge in, so the bullet had whizzed harmlessly by.

Well ! Nagoji is there safe enough ; the next thing to be done is to capture him. Mr. Anderson shrinks from any further sacrifice of life if it can by any possibility be avoided. The men are all alert enough now ; no one will get away from, or get to the dharamsala again unnoticed. The patel and

other villagers are called up and questioned, touching the matter of supplies. *They* give anything to Nagoji? No, no ! They *had* given him a little something that mid-day ; but what were they to do ? They were poor miserables. Nagoji was a fiend ; anyhow, no more provisions for Nagoji, decides Bob. There is no water either, procurable inside the dharamsala, so Bob says, " We'll starve him out, young 'un, or he may make a dash for it." And then the scouts are called in, and a strict watch is enjoined on all sides. Three o'clock now ; it is awfully hot, not a breath of wind, and the clouds are banking up ominously in the north-east. There is a storm brewing, which is a very good thing for Nagoji. Bob feels anxious and uneasy. And so time passes on—with leaden feet. The hot young blood is boiling in Duckworth's veins. Bob, too, is chafing at the inaction, but he cannot at present devise any better measures. " Five o'clock ! I'll just go round and see that the fellows are maintaining the look-out ; you keep these men here alive. We'll move in on him when it gets dark," so Bob to Duckworth, and then the former disappears on his visiting rounds. Men have been

posted all round the dharamsala, while the main body, with the two Europeans, were stationed in front of the gate ; but nothing has happened all this time, and the young 'un is sick and tired of it all.

Bob's back turned, young Duckworth, wearied and impatient, began strolling aimlessly about, but gradually and as if attracted by some magnetic power, he gets nearer, ever nearer to the dharamsala ; not in front of it, but under the eastern wall. The men watch him unconcernedly enough. The chota-sahib knows what he is about, and, indeed, it is highly probable that when the lad started his prowlings, he had no definite end in view, he was merely restless. Gradually he draws near the wall, then he thinks of poor murdered Gainu, and the blood begins to boil and the thoughts to rush on tumultuously. He despises the physical prowess of the native. So, gradually, ever gradually overborne on by that magnetic influence, he gets nearer and nearer to the little wicket-gate. His eyes are sparkling now, his teeth are clenched, his breathing short and quick. "I'll do it. By Heavens, I'll do it!" and the next moment *he* also is lost to sight inside the dharamsala.

The men see him go ; till the very last moment, no one had divined his intent. Then a muttered "Wah ! wah !" escapes from their lips, and they gaze, fascinated as it were, at the little wicket-gate. The moments pass on. No sound. "What *can* have happened ?" "The naik has killed him, as he killed Gainu !" and then one of them darts off to tell the Superintending Sahib that his young assistant has rushed into the very jaws of death.

Duckworth, more fortunate than Gainu, caught sight of his man as he passed through the gate. Nagoji was seated close to the wall on the right-hand side of the entrance with Mr. Anderson's revolver in his hand ; evidently he placed great reliance upon it. His sword and gun were lying behind him at a few paces distance. The naik was slightly off his guard, he had not heard the approach of his youthful foe, so was taken unawares. On seeing Duckworth, he sprang to his feet, and the two closed with each other at once. The young Englishman had fallen into a mistake common to many of his countrymen, he underrated his opponent's strength. He was himself a mere youth, not yet in full posses-

sion of his manhood, while Nagoji was a regular "Pehlwan," an athlete versed in every resource of the wrestling ring, with muscles of iron, in the very highest training, and naturally endowed with great personal strength; the contest was therefore an unequal one. The violence of the young Englishman's onslaught had caused Nagoji to drop the revolver, so both men were unarmed, for Duckworth had left his weapons in the "nalah" where they had been waiting; and at the first he had the best of it. But slowly, slowly the naik worked his right arm free from his assailant's embrace and fastened with an iron grip upon the boy's throat; and so swaying and struggling, both men in the death-grapple go reeling out into the open court, as if by mutual consent, there to settle this quarrel once for all; mute, their hearts flaming with the fires of hell, relentless, *murderous*. Closer and closer press those iron fingers. Duckworth holds on gallantly, trying to force his enemy backwards; he has the advantage of inches on his side; but vainly! There is a singing in his ears now, his eyes are starting from their sockets, but still he holds on bravely, swinging backwards and

forwards. Then his thoughts go back to his past short life. "This brute is too strong for me." Press again ; in at the small of the waist. No good ! The lad sees in thought his white-haired old father ; the soft, stout little mother, beaming through her spectacles as she is wont to do. There is little Archie, and dimpling little sister May. He remembers how he did old Swisher about those lines, and how Jones got wrongfully caned for the whole business ; and then a blank. The naik is throttling the life out of the boy. The tiger is all awake ; here is one of these detested sahibs who have hunted him like a partridge upon the mountains. "He shall die ! He shall die !" he mutters to himself—Whack ! It was Nagoji's turn to see stars now, as, borne backward by the blow, he reels a step, and then falls prostrate ; is instantly pounced upon, and before he knows what he is about, is handcuffed and bound, and put beyond the ability of doing any more mischief for the present.

Bob was still engaged looking up his sentries when the news was brought to him of his assistant's foolhardiness. In a moment he saw the rashness of the

attempt, and his heart failed him; no shot had been fired, it was therefore much to be feared that the boy had met with the same fate as had Gainu. Instantly he set off to the rescue; come what may, the young un must be saved, if possible; if not, then avenged. Ordering up the men from the nalah, but without waiting for them, Bob dashed at his fullest speed for the wicket-gate, through it, saw the struggle still going on between the bèder and the boy, and instantly, with a blow like a sledge-hammer's, straight from the shoulder, backed by upwards of fifteen stone of solid flesh, and assisted by the speed at which he was travelling, he knocked Nagoji clean head over heels, Bob's fist landing right on the side of that worthy's head. Even had the dacoit chief been prepared for the onslaught, he must have gone over; as it was, he went down like a bullock in his tracks; several policemen were close behind their leader, and they immediately precipitated themselves on the fallen man, and secured him, as we have seen. Bob turned at once to the lad, who was insensible, but still breathing. "Water! water!" and in an incredibly short time, though very long it seemed to Bob,

who was supporting Duckworth's head upon his knee, some is brought in a lota, with which he sprinkles the boy's face plentifully, and very soon the breath comes gasping back, and the blue eyes open foolishly, the young 'un struggles up into a sitting posture. "Where is he?" he asks in a hollow whisper. Bob points to Nagoji as he lies bound hand and foot, sullen and quiescent, whereon the young 'un sinks back again whispering, "Wasn't born to be hung, eh?" and thus by this feeble time-honoured joke relieves Bob's apprehensions considerably.

Now, then, to make the boy comfortable, some of the men bring up the bedding; a corner of the dharamsala under the most serviceable-looking part of the roof is cleaned out, and Duckworth is made as comfortable as circumstances will admit of. Nagoji is carried off to another corner, and there deposited like a bale of cotton, while the men dispose of themselves in the best way they can. Poor Gainu's body is laid reverently and tenderly on one side of the little gate, and then four men are told off to do duty as sentries, two mounting guard over the prisoner and two over the entrance to the dharm-

sala. Now for the commissariat ; Gainu is very much missed in this department, all the milk in the village is laid under levy, and nearly all the flour ; this latter is the flour from "jowari," or great millet, (*Sorghum vulgare*), the best the little place can supply ; then fires are lit under the sheltering roofs, and culinary operations are soon in full progress. Bob gets a tumbler full of warmed-up milk, with a dash of whisky in it, and gives it to Duckworth, who takes it feebly and in little gulps, being impelled to follow this method of imbibing in consequence of the rough treatment which his swallowing apparatus has undergone, and shortly the boy is asleep, and is dreaming of fighting and school and the jolly old home away yonder there in dear old England.

Bob of course was very soon smoking his cheroot, and thinking over recent events, his meditations being of a very mixed nature. The loss of Gainu was a great sorrow to him, he had a respect and affection for the brave, blundering, blustering, faithful fellow ; and Anant Rao's death had deprived him of one of his most intelligent and trusted subordinates ; but still, he had got Nagoji laid by safe enough, and that

was a great triumph and solace ; so the police superintendent thought and smoked, too excited to think of eating or sleeping yet. The night comes on now, dark, dark as the proverbial wolf's mouth ; torches have been improvised of "salei" (*Boswellia thurifera*) wood, and are flickering and glaring, making the darkness darker by their impotent attempts to dispel it ; one cannot *see* the clouds, but one *knows* that they are there ; no moon, no stars, and away in the distance, low-muttered grumblings, and every now and then a vivid flash of lightning tears up the black massive darkness heaped up over there in the east. Softly, softly, oh ! so softly, there springs up a sighing, sobbing, gentle wind, the trees are whispering rustlingly to each other, the flames of the torches flicker ; then, pat, pat, pat, oh ! so gently and quietly, the great raindrops come down, slowly, intermittently ; presently they pull themselves together, quicker and faster and smaller ; there is a great *smell* of rain. Swish, swish ! here comes the wind, rushing, wrestling with the trees, howling there through the gaps in the hills. Puff ! puff ! puff ! out go the torches one after the other. Souse ! the heavens

are opened all at once ; the rain comes down with a regular plump ; a blaze of greenish-yellow light, brilliant after an unearthly fashion, revealing every nook and corner, figure and movement ; utter, intense darkness. Crash ! overhead almost, deafening, stunning, roars the thunder, and then goes dying away, reverberating among the adjacent hills. The giants are at play, they are calling to their lady-loves, the nymphs and fays of hill and stream and forest ; the wind has passed on to tell others that they are coming, these gigantic gambollers, and the rain is falling down like a solid wall. Sh ! sh ! sh ! like the titanic hissing of some fabled dragon, like red-hot iron suddenly plunged in ice-cold water ; how green and yellow all the faces look ! and before the ghastly radiance has passed away almost—Bang, bang ! crash, crash ! about their ears breaks the thunder. The giants are uncommonly near, too near to be pleasant, though all the time there is a sense of defiance, of recklessness, of wild joy in one's heart as one hears and feels the elements, and braves their most terrible fury. It is passing on now—away, away go those giants, with their awful shouting and laughter. Go play with woodland fay and river

nymph, you rough old giants, they are meeter play-fellows than we, we poor things of mortal mould! The clouds are hurrying by, the stars are peeping out again, and the moon is unveiling herself once more, now that those rude people have passed on, and is once more gazing placidly on the earth; there is a gentle rain and a gentle breeze; the trees are wide awake, rustling and pruning themselves after their refreshing bath, and man is growling and swearing at his wet clothes, the leaky roof, and the damp, muddy ground. Mr. Anderson draws a long breath; he got very close to Nagoji when the storm commenced, but that individual has either had his spirit broken, at last, or else he has not recovered from the effects of that swinging blow (Bob has not, his knuckles are horridly bruised), or he is too well secured, for there he is still, quiescent and bound, like a helpless log. And thus the night passes, an anxious one for the police superintendent; he sleeps only by fits and starts, he is very solicitous as to Nagoji's safe keeping. The young assistant slumbers peacefully, the storm has cooled the air, and the night, from a climatic point of view, is an almost perfect one.

CHAPTER XIII.

IO TRIUMPHE! VÆ VICTIS!

THE next morning was a delightful one, a cool fresh breeze, the rain diamonds on the leaves and grass sparkling in the sun's rays ; all nature seemed refreshed and invigorated, the cattle were capering about, even the lean old frames that did duty for mamma buffaloes were kicking and whisking their tails, aping in ungainly fashion the sportive tricks of their offspring gambolling around them, the birds were singing their best—(Indian bird music as compared to its Western counterpart is in about the same ratio to European as is other music emanating from Eastern latitudes)—and the pestiferous old crows were cawing in a maddening way. Young Duckworth's throat was very sore and swollen, it had to be fomented outwardly, while warm milk and whiskey were again administered internally ; the boy was

slightly feverish too, and so it was decided that he should not ride, but that he should be carried on one of the ladders with a mattress tightly bound on it. Poor Gainu was buried at very earliest dawn by his caste mates, and the ceremony had thrown a gloom over the whole party: poor fellow! he lies close to the "dharamsala," a bare, desolate spot enough, but "little he'll reck if they let him sleep on." Nagoji was very stubborn; he would do nothing, neither eat, drink, or move; vain attempts were made to get him to stand upright, so there was nothing for it but to place him upon another ladder not *quite* so gently or easily as Duckworth had been, then the party moved off, Bob riding by Duckworth's side, and doing his best to cheer him, for the lad was heavy and unwell. The knocking about, the semi-starvation, the scuffle with Nagoji; the general roughing it, in fact, had told their tale; as he said, feebly joking, he felt an awful worm.

The Gonds made capital bearers, and the party moved along briskly, covering the ground considerably faster than they had done the day before; arrived at the halting-place of the previous day, a slight pause

was made, one of the sowars was sent on ahead to Jaffirabad with the news of the capture of the redoubtable freebooter, and then, hey! on again! up with the ladders, and follow in the wake of the messenger.

The sowar galloped off; he was bursting with importance, and literally "devoured the way," into the town of Jaffirabad, helter-skelter, driving the crowd before him like chaff, scattering them in all directions, a regular Johnny Gilpin passage. Arrived at the palace, he took but little time to tell his tale, and very soon it was bruited about that Nagoji had been captured. The story received many additions, the deeds of the doughty naik were much magnified, and the number of those said to have been slain by him was truly terrific; one of the sahibs had been killed, the other badly wounded,—he would have been killed too, had not the valiant Cassim Aga—"may his shadow never grow less!"—come in to the rescue;—in fact, but for the contingent of Jaffirabad police, Nagoji would never have been captured. So the city was presently all alive, humming like a hive of swarming bees, and went streaming forth to meet the

expected procession. There were various emotions aroused in Jaffirabad at the hearing of the news ; Nagoji was a terror, Nagoji was a nuisance, but Nagoji was open-handed ; when he had made a lucky haul, he was no niggard, and his contributions to the privy purses of some of those in authority were not to be despised ; however, here he was now, caught, and about to be caged ! Therefore there was great excitement, thronging and pushing ; but all, as is usually the case with native crowds, were good-humoured and docile. Ram Rao's mind was soon made up ; Nagoji was trapped at last, he would not let him go again if he could help it ; the Jaffirabad police had had a hand in his capture, and he knew that Nagoji was not the sort of man to let that sort of thing pass unnoticed, given the time and opportunity for retaliation. Accordingly Ram Rao summoned his array, and rode forth on his ambling steed, clad in snow-white flowing garments with a red turban as large as an ordinary cart-wheel on his head, to meet his brother " peeler " of Lolapur.

In the distance a cloud of dust, and gradually figures are discernible ; there can be no doubt but that they

are Nagoji and his captors ; the batch of prisoners sent on previously have arrived safely, and are securely immured ; now comes the principal prize of all. Steadily the British force comes on, Mr. Anderson, on seeing that the people of Jaffirabad have turned out to meet them, gets on in front and greets the native superintendent of police. The populace are rather staggered at the sight of him, "he does not look so very much damaged, after all ;" but this other sahib has been hurt anyhow. "Look ! here he comes on a ladder !" "And here comes Nagoji on a ladder too !" "Well, he does not look very happy either !" and so remarks are bandied about. The two parties halt, and Mr. Anderson makes over his prisoner, formally, to Ram Rao ; the Lolapur police give up their places to their Jaffirabad brothers in arms, and they all move on to the town, followed and preceded by the crowd.

When the procession moved on again, Ram Rao rode up to Nagoji's side, and for a minute the two men gazed into each other's eyes. Nagoji's look was searching and earnest, Ram Rao's scornful and triumphant. When satisfied with his inspection, the

dacoit chief turned away his head, a deep scowl settling on his face ; he knew now that he could expect no aid from the Brahmin ; that worthy evidently intended to carry into practice the well-known saying, "hit a man when he is down"—keep him down, dance on him, trample on him. The two men understood each other well—Ram Rao had crossed the Rubicon, Nagoji should not escape if he (Ram Rao) could prevent it. To Jaffirabad together they go,—the revengeful, the triumphant, the weary, the watchful, the careless, the careworn ; all those, in fact, who make up every assemblage that comes together in this battle-field of life—the world.

At length the prisoner was safely lodged in a strong stone room in the "kacheri," Mr. Anderson did not leave him till he ascertained that this was done. The batch sent in before were in the ordinary lock-up and were heavily manacled ; you may be sure that Ram Rao attended to the chaining up of Nagoji himself. Before leaving, Mr. Anderson saw that a strong guard was mounted, and he guessed, from Ram Rao's behaviour generally, that the dacoit was in fairly safe custody ; he therefore betook himself with a tolerably

easy conscience to the travellers' bungalow, there to rest and refresh himself after all his toils and anxieties.

Young Duckworth, much to his relief, had been carried straight to the travellers' bungalow,* which was outside the town, as he was thereby saved the mortification that it would have been to him to have been paraded in his semi-helpless condition through the crowded streets. The whole journey had been gall and wormwood to him, and it was with a sigh of relief that he threw himself into an armchair, and saw the hateful ladder, his whilom means of conveyance, pass out of sight round a corner on its way towards the stables. The boy was tired out, and it was with thankfulness that he ordered baths and breakfast for his chief and himself, sinking back afterwards into an easy armchair with an indescribable feeling of downright comfortable weariness.

* These bungalows (or houses) are to be found at convenient points along most high-roads in India, and supply (for European travellers) the place of hotels. They are usually furnished, so far as beds, tables, baths, and chairs go, and a messman is generally located in them, who is able to supply a meal of some sort at short notice.

Thus he awaited Bob, and tub and breakfast, thoroughly worn out, and yet, somehow, thoroughly comfortable

The bungalow was a curious, desolate-looking place; home was the very last idea it would suggest to anyone. Long and low, tiled roof, verandah back and front, surrounded by a large expanse of compound, which even now (at the end of the rainy season) looked barren and bare, and situated on the side of the high-road to Lolapur. The walls were painted light blue, with a deep border of white; there were two decent armchairs with leg-rests in the front verandah; in each room a table, two cots with cane bottoms, and four chairs in various stages of dilapidation, more especially as regards seats—workers in cane were evidently at a discount in Jaffirabad; where the seats had worn too much to afford sitting support, they had been patched up with boards. The floors of the rooms were covered with date matting which had, apparently, not been renewed or repaired for years, entailing caution on the part of the temporary tenant consequent on the holes existing in very part of it. At the Jaffirabad travellers' bungalow

one has to pay Rs. 1 (a rupee) per diem for the privilege of occupying one of those rooms—well, well, it is better than nothing ; any port in a storm.

Bob found his bath ready when he got back. He sent off a sowar (two had at once been placed at his disposal by Ram Rao) to Avakhalli for the tonga and baggage that had been left there, and very soon the young 'un and he were seated at breakfast. How they had enjoyed their tubs only those cut off from that indispensable comfort for a day or two, as they had been, can tell, and their appetites were keen as they began their meal. A “spatch cock” (variously known as “sudden death,” or “spread eagle”), egg curry, rice, and chupatties (made of wheaten flour though) was their bill of fare, and the mess-man actually had some beer, so they thought themselves very well off. After breakfast, each man selected a cot, and presently both were sound asleep.

About four in the afternoon, the sowar returned with the tonga, and the arrival of the vehicle aroused Bob from his slumbers. He had a change of linen, and got into the best clothes that he had with him ; for it had been arranged that at about five he should

wait on the Raja of Jaffirabad. The Durbar, that is Hari Pant, the Dewan, Ram Rao, and one or two others who formed the brain (as it might be called) of the Jaffirabad Government, had met that mid-day, and after anxious consultation, had determined to throw Nagoji over. The Raja was one of the old style of native potentate, he harassed himself not about affairs of State, his ministers were paid to do that. So long as he himself got all he wanted, *when* he wanted it, and *how* he wanted it, he did not trouble himself at all. His poor ryots were dreadfully squeezed and bullied; murders, dacoities, and other violent crimes were of frequent, almost daily, occurrence. In fact, the little state was so vilely governed that even the British paramount power (slow as it is to move) had been forced to intimate its displeasure in no very measured terms, and Hari Pant and the rest knew that something must be done, or else their esteemed Raja would be sent off to some retired spot by the sea, there to luxuriate in splendid ease, on an ample income, every wish gratified, but with his liberty restricted. What did he care about having his liberty

restricted? He who never walked a yard if he could help it, or took any exercise whatever, except a moderate drive in his carriage and pair, extending over—perhaps—an hour. If he only knew what an elysium was in store for him, if he persisted in his present evil ways; or rather, if they, his counsellors, did! The Raja would be the same Raja to the end of the chapter, exile or no exile; but what would become of them? No, no! Nagoji must be sacrificed; that would put off the evil day for some time, at all events. Hari Pant could write black white, if ever any man could, and here was a splendid opportunity for displaying his talents.

Punctually at five o'clock Mr. Anderson arrived at the entrance to the durbar hall. This entrance was guarded by the whole available strength of the Jaffirabad army, seventy-five, all told, horse and foot. The Raja sent his own carriage to the travellers' bungalow, and a gun was fired off at the palace as soon as it was known that the English police sahib was on the road, much to the Raja's satisfaction. This matter of salutes was the only affair of state about which he concerned himself, and he settled

himself in his chair with a pleased smile when the report of the piece of ordnance met his ear. He was entitled to a salute of seven guns, and he waited anxiously for the next ear-tickler. The moments pass—nothing! “In the name of Krishna, what has happened?” he inquires, impatiently. Hari Pant explains matters to him, and when he is told of what is taking place, and is soothed by the assurance that seven guns shall be fired when he leaves the audience chamber, to be followed by fireworks later on, he lolls back in his chair well content. There is a pleasure then in anticipation. Mr. Anderson arrived, he marched up the hall; the Raja was undecided whether to go and meet his guest or not, as he had no brass collar on or any other insignia of office about him. By the time, however, that he reached his chair, the Raja had struggled to his feet, and Mr. Anderson put an end to all further hesitation on his part by promptly seizing his hand and nearly wringing it off. The Englishman being a very good Mahrathi scholar, commenced the conversation by remarking, in that language, “It was a very good thing for the public weal that Nagoji had been cap-

tured and safely lodged 'in durance vile.'” A blank look came over the Raja's face. “Who is Nagoji?” he whispered to Hari Pant, and that astute individual immediately took up the conversational running, while the Raja relapsed into silence, a little sulky at having had to undergo all this bother for a sahib, who did not wear a cocked hat, and who had not even got any brass buttons. Mr. Anderson, not being a man of words, the palaver very soon came to an end. The crime having been committed on British soil, Nagoji and the others will be handed over to the British under the terms of the extradition treaty existing between the Government of Quack Quack and that of Jaffirabad, to be dealt with by a British Court of Law, as soon as the necessary formalities have been completed. Meanwhile, Mr. Anderson may rest assured of the safe custody of the dacoits. Then “pan-supâri” was handed round (Bob kept his portion in his hand, and threw it away surreptitiously as soon as he got back into the tonga). The durbar was over, Bob withdrew; the Raja got his seven guns, while half a dozen rockets, and as many crackers, were let off. The Raja slept the sleep of the

just that night ; he had transacted a most unusually large amount of business during the day, he thought in self-laudation.

Hari Pant, Ram Rao, and Cassim Aga followed Mr. Anderson to the travellers' bungalow. They found the worthy gentleman happy in one armchair, with a cheroot, young Duckworth in the other ; and Bob was working off the ill-effects of the durbar by giving the young 'un a graphic account of it all, which made the boy laugh ; this was delicately flattering to Bob, for it made him think himself no end of a witty dog, which he was not. Bob arranged all details with the three Jaffirabad representatives, regarding the transfer of the captured dacoits to the Lolapur police, and hinted to Ram Rao and to Cassim Aga that he would sing their praises loudly when Nagoji was safe in Lolapur jail ; a very cunning move. Then dinner, consisting of soup, roast fowl and curried fowl, with chupatties and beer—not much variety in the menu at a travellers' bungalow ; and clankety, clank, clank, clank ; clack, clack, clack, clack along the hard high-road back again to Lolapur. Both men are well pleased ; and yet—" Poor Gainu !

poor old fellow ! and poor Anant Rao, too !” sighs Bob, mournfully, regretfully, as he recalls the events of the last few days. We drop through the trap-door, the swift current carries us away out of sight, out of mind, and the world wags on just as well without us. And it is well that it should be so ! Drive on, merrily along the moonlit road to Lolapur, oh, tonga-driver !

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

THE drive was a wearisome one again, it could hardly help being that. Young Duckworth was very talkative and elated at starting ; but gradually the monotonous, incidentless journey, tired him ; he grew fidgety and restless, and it needed all his companion's efforts to keep him up to the mark at all. Mr. Anderson felt very satisfied and content ; he had done a good stroke of work ; as in all things mundane, bitter mingled with the sweet, in the chain of his reflections ; his success had been dearly purchased, but he had done his duty to the best of his power : there is a feeling of satisfaction in that. As Duckworth grew more and more restless, the elder man's attention was diverted from himself. The boy had feverish symptoms ; the fatigues of the exciting chase had been too much for him, and he needed looking after. So, on through the darkness, on

through the moonlight which succeeded it ; on through the increasing brightness of the coming day ; on through the fresh, cool, sunlit morning ; past the barracks, and on to the Collector's house ; there to deposit the weary lad. Mr. Musprat was having his "chota-hazri" in the verandah as the tonga drew up to the door, and he accorded its occupants a hearty welcome. Bob would not stay, though entreated to do so by the hospitable Collector ; he was in a hurry ; so merely telling Mr. Musprat that Nagoji was in safe keeping, he went home. Duckworth, meanwhile, was put to bed by his fussy, kind-hearted host, and had hot tea poured down his throat, whether he liked it or not. The doctor being sent for, prescribed rest and quinine ; there was not much the matter with the youngster. When Bob reached home, he found Mrs. Anderson and the children all in the garden, as it was still quite early in the morning ; and the family were reunited. You may be sure that Bob's was a hearty welcome !

A pleasant time of it in Lolapur ; Bob and his assistant were the heroes of the hour. Bob did not say much of the affair ; but Duckworth had no

hesitation about entering into details. He told how steadily his chief had led his men up the bare slopes of Mahadroog, and gave a very graphic description of the way in which he had rushed to his rescue when he (the narrator) was being throttled by Nagoji. Seeing that the youngster was past all power of observation when the rescue was effected, the manner in which he described Mr. Anderson's rush and the knock-down blow, did credit to his imagination. Anyway, the boy was very grateful. He was young and green, you know, and so he was simple enough to *be* grateful. He'll learn worldly wisdom as he grows older ; let the boy be ! Verdure is refreshing, and it passes away so soon. Oh, so soon ! Mr. Musprat wrote in very eulogistically about the whole affair, and, later on, it formed, by a good deal, the most noteworthy incident in the Police Administration Report of the the year. At head-quarters, something was even said about rewarding the Police Superintendent of Lolapur. "Give him a C.I.E." "Can't ; belongs to the great unwashed, you know." Colonel Croaker, the present Inspector-General, is just about to retire, Mr. Anderson's name is well up on the list ; some-

thing is said about putting him in as Inspector-General ; but Major Duphers of the Staff Corps, a policeman also, has to be provided for ; it is true that he is junior to Bob, but then—he married Lady Theophilus Grampus's sister. Duphers is certainly not very brilliant ; but he dances well, and he sings admirably. Besides, you see, he is the brother-in-law of a member of the Indian Council, who is a K.C.S.I. to boot ; and he simply *must* be provided for ; so Duphers gets the Inspector-Generalship, and Bob has an extra pat of butter in the Annual Report—very succulent provender. “ ’Pon my word, you know, it is really dreadfully embarrassing when these U. C. S. fellows show up like this. Doosid nuisance ! ” says Mr. Chief Secretary Simpkins to the Commissioner. So it is. So it is.

The weather was very hot and sultry, and the good people of Lolapur gasped it out as well as they could. Every evening when the friendly shadows lengthened out and the faint cooling breeze sprang up they struggled down gallantly to the Gymkhana ; the younger members played lawn tennis steadily, while the elder ones chatted cosily, their armchairs drawn

near together in the broad shady verandah of the shed. To the latter class the Hirehgaon dacoity was a perfect treasure trove, in the way of providing food for conversation. The pros and cons were discussed in a thoroughly business-like manner, till, at last, most of the speakers knew a great deal more of the details of the dacoity than did either Anderson or Duckworth ; if either of these ventured to hazard even a mild correction, they were sat upon promptly. Mr. Anderson was put down in a gentle, pitying sort of way ; but Duckworth was, figuratively, jumped upon, savagely, almost vindictively. It was a capital debating ground for both military and civil sections of the community, and many a wordy war was waged between the Collector and the Judge on the one side, between the Colonel and Major on the other ; it was a relief from shop, everlasting shop, which formed the ordinary mental pabulum of these worthy gentlemen. The ladies, too, were very much interested in it all ; young Duckworth was their hero. "Fancy the dear boy being nearly choked to death ; what a very horrid man that Nagoji must be !" "Quite charmingly shocking you know."

Mr. Musprat set all the necessary machinery to work, the clauses of the Extradition Treaty between the British Government and the State of Jaffirabad were brought into play, that is, those clauses touching the rendition of criminals captured under the peculiar circumstances which surrounded the apprehension of Nagoji and his band of desperadoes, and ten days after they had been lodged in prison in Jaffirabad they were *en route* for Lolapur. Ram Rao and Cassim Aga accompanied them, therefore the whole number were duly accounted for on their arrival at their destination. Bhimoo Gowda, and company, were there before them, and were snugly located in the district jail. The country had been scoured for Rama Naik and his wadars; altogether there was a goodly gathering in Lolapur prison, and Mr. Fellowes, the District Judge, groaned in spirit over his weary task. The lies he would have to listen to; the chicanery he would have to unravel; the terrible tale of crime he would have to weigh and mete out justice for. No wonder that he was perturbed and worried.

Time passed! Mr. Anderson was hard at work, getting up the details of the case, a task in which he

missed the aid of Anant Rao very acutely. The "white wings" were spread and preened, that is, tents were got out, pitched and generally over-hauled for the travelling season so abhorred by old Bai Luxmi and her sort. Then the wings are spread again in earnest for flight, and the civilians, with the exception of the Judges and the Police Superintendent, who is perforce detained, have vanished in different directions. They will not reunite till the following June, when the clouds banking up in the south-west will drive them back to Lolapur, returning to that ark of refuge like so many doves of the Deluge.

The months sped on; the end of November was drawing near, the weather simply delicious—cold sharp nights, brisk energetic mornings, the air full of ozone. Europeans revel in it all, their Aryan brethren are chilled and uncomfortable, another illustration of the familiar old adage, "One man's meat, another man's poison." Mr. Fellowes and Mr. Anderson had but little leisure time. Forty-eight individuals were arraigned for their share in the Hirehgaon dacoity; the daily papers teemed with it. The "Lolapur Tragedy," in big

black characters, stared the reader in the face every morning as he opened the damp sheets. At length the weary task was completed. Mr. Fellowes condemned Nagoji, Bhimoo Gowda, Narrayen Rao, Rama Naik, and Timma Mahar to the gallows; of the others, some got terms of imprisonment varying according to the prominence of the parts taken by them in the perpetration of the outrage; a few were released, the evidence being insufficient to convict them, while three were made "Queen's evidence," and thus saved themselves at the expense of their comrades. Mr. Anderson was well pleased, for his arch-enemy, Nagoji, had been run to earth, and his gang completely broken up; the police of Lolapur have done well. Nagoji, Bhimoo, and Narrayen promptly appealed to the High Court, and for the name of the thing, Rama's and Timma's names were included in the petition. The appeal was heard in due course, the sentences on Nagoji, Rama, and Timma were confirmed, while Bhimoo's and Narrayen's were commuted into transportation for life. Poor Timma! His guilt was almost infinitesimal; he could not very well help himself. Bhimoo and Narrayen were arch-

fiends, as compared with him, but they had not been present at the actual murders ; morally they were far more guilty than the Mahar was, but legally, ah ! that is a very different affair. The Judge gave orders that the executions should take place at the scene of the crime—nasty work for Mr. Anderson, deeper experiences still for his youthful Assistant.

Mr. Anderson had to write a special report on the whole business, and, true to his word, he praised the Jaffirabad officials, and made mention warmly of the help afforded to him by them. In due course a Government Resolution emanated from the cool heights of the breezy Cœruleans, Mr. Anderson was praised, the Raja thanked, Hari Pant, Ram Rao, and Cassim Aga lauded to the skies. It was determined to try kindness once more with these obstinately backward people, so the Raja was made a K.C.I.E., Hari Pant and Ram Rao C.S.I.'s, and Cassim Aga was presented with a handsome new turban, and a very big gun in the political line was told off to go to Jaffirabad, with elephants, camels, and sowars galore, to give the men their respective rewards ; cannon enough were fired to satiate even the Raja. He tried

very hard to get his salute of seven guns increased to ten, but this could not be done. "We will see about it," the big, big P. had said, mysteriously, and the Raja had perforce to be content with that. Hari Pant and Ram Rao were very glad that, for once, they had furthered the cause of justice, and they were also very much relieved when Nagoji had been safely hung out of the way. The toys that they have had given to them do not, however, afford them one tithe of the satisfaction which the reflection that the past has been forgiven them for this one flash of enforced virtue does. So the world wags on. Verily, verily, thou art a very jade, Dame Fortune! Thou wert born out of time, oh Nagoji! Four hundred years ago the golden spurs for thee; and three inches of thy dagger for yon bestial kingling, would have called forth a popular verdict of "Serve him right!" By my halidame, Dame Fortune, thou art a very jade!

Then, away there, in that peaceful-looking spot, Hirchgaon, a tragedy was again enacted. Three men rendered up their lives to the God that gave them; those lives being recalled, not at His command,

but by man's decree ; decree issued in obedience to that awful mandate, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." One morning when nature was looking her loveliest and her best, and the great benignant Star of Day was beaming down in love upon this world, these three men looked their last upon this earth ; upon what ? The scene of their awful crime ! As eternal night descended on them, did that other night come back ? Whose shrieks are those that are ringing in their ears, as drowning, drowning, down they go into the black awful abyss ? And, ha ! ha ! ha ! Durga Dèvi is laughing, cackling discordantly, "Blood ! blood ! blood !" It is worth while to leave her babul kuran, and look on at this dance of death, "this grim, accursed revel." Those three men had been murdered, murdered as cruelly and relentlessly as they had murdered their victims ; and yet it was well that they had expiated their crime : the great fundamental law of self-preservation required it ; no one could be blamed ; only ignorance and lust had brought them to this ; who had taught them better ? Back, back, back for the *fons et origo mali* to that wily old serpent-devil

tempting the common grandmother (several times removed) of Nagoji and Timma, of Plato and of Socrates, of the holiest and greatest of men, of the vilest and most foolish, of you and me, oh, reader ! and so the world progresses—"A mad world, O my masters."

Mr. Anderson can never go near Hirehgaon now except quite *sub rosa* ; Timma's wife makes life within a radius of ten miles of that village, perfectly unendurable to him. She continually hangs round his tents, when he is pitched anywhere in the neighbourhood with her four children, whom she parades ostentatiously, and behaves to in a truly motherly manner (much to the poor babies bewilderment, for they are far more used to kicks than to kisses), calling upon him to provide for them and her (especially her), as he had deprived her of her dear husband, and the poor children of an affectionate parent. This is very painful and embarrassing to the tender-hearted Superintendent of Police ; he had foolishly given the woman ten rupees on the occasion of her first appeal, and then his doom was sealed. He is thinking seriously of applying for a transfer to some other

district, though Lolapur suits him in every way. Nagoji is already coming to be looked upon as a hero by the country people around, ballads in his praise are sung by camp fires, and at social gatherings generally. Doubtless as time mellows the freshness of his achievements, he will take rank in the popular imagination as a patriot and a warrior. The faithful Raghoo got safely away into the furthestmost recesses of Central India, seeking refuge in an independent State. A price is set upon his head. One cannot help hoping that he may baffle justice and pursue the even tenor of his way unmolested. He was faithful, he was grateful, surely he deserves immunity from punishment. Humble poor little virtues are these, truth and gratitude, like their prototype the violet, and, like it, most frequently found in out of the way and undreamt of spots; how delighted we are, and how much we make of them when we come upon them! Ahmed's bones whiten up there on lonely Mahadroog, poor relics of poor humanity, startling the casual passer-by into momentary thoughtfulness, preaching a speedily forgotten sermon. He was a wild beast, as wild as the jackals and the vultures which performed

his funeral obsequies—agents appointed by Mother Nature—kindly even in her implacability and impassiveness, to supplement her mightier servants of unseen power—a wild beast born, a wild beast he lived, and as a wild beast he died, and had a wild beast's sepulture!

Mr. Anderson is still a district Superintendent of Police, and is unlikely ever to rise beyond the office; but when his time comes it may be as truly said of him, as it has been said of another more widely known than he :

“He tried to do his duty.”

THE END.

THE LOLAPUR WEEK.

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THE LOLAPUR WEEK.

CHAPTER I.

THE GYMKHANA.

THE Lolapur Gymkhana* is the great gathering ground of an evening for all sociable Lolapurites. It is situated in the "maidau"† which separates, as it were, the dwelling places of the civilian and military sections of the community. The Gymkhana shed (as it is called) is a pretty structure of grey stone, two stories high ; on the ground floor are the dressing-rooms, lavatories, etc., while above is one long room with verandahs on the north and south sides. This

* The place of games : a term used to designate the spot where the lawn tennis and badminton courts, the cricket ground, etc., are located.

† A plain ; an open level space.

long room is used for cricket tiffins,* etc., etc., and the verandahs form capital vantage grounds from which to watch the various games as they are being played; these games being the *raison d'être* of the building. On one side is the badminton† shed, where, of an evening, many a battle over the flying shuttlecock is fought. To the south is the cricket-ground;—a very good wicket being obtainable by dint of a little watering and rolling. On the north side, at the back of the shed, are the tennis courts: the delight of the fair dames and gay youths of Lolapur; dancing, of course, always excepted! Surrounding the Gymkhana building, and embracing the tennis courts and badminton shed, is a large and pretty garden, carefully tended and watered; the source, whence, on the occasions of “burra-khanahs,”‡ the matrons of Lolapur supplement their supplies of flowers when those in

* Luncheon.

† A game much followed in India; it is usually played by two on each side, and the object in view is to strike a shuttlecock backwards and forwards over a net, somewhat in the same fashion that a ball is struck over the net at lawn tennis; space does not admit of a more detailed account here.

‡ Literally a large dinner; or in slang phrase, applied to a dinner party.

their own gardens are not sufficient for their requirements. Saturday evening is a great evening at the Gymkhana, for on that day the band plays at the band-stand there, and all Lolapur and his wife attend, with even greater regularity than on other days, to listen to its strains. Approaching the shed from the Southern side, which is also its front one, a gay and animated scene presented itself on this particular evening with which we are concerned. In front of the entrance to the shed, and a little way from it, is the band-stand, the band was playing the "Blue Danube" waltz; the children of the station were walking round hand-in-hand in couples, or singly, or in groups, attended by white robed ayahs, some of whom bore in their arms younger brothers and sisters of the small-promenaders, and by long-coated and belted "pattawallas."* Drawn up on the road was a long string of carriages of all sorts, some of them tenanted by the wives and children of those residents of Lolapur who were not in what is called

* Literally belt-wearer. Usually a Government servant, his duties being to act as a messenger; to procure supplies when travelling, etc.; he generally wears a belt with a brass badge on it as a mark of his office.

“society” clerks, overseers, etc. On the maidau outside the charmed limits of the Gymkhana property, were a number of white-coated European soldiers, some of whom were gyrating in each other’s arms to the inspiriting strains of the valse ; some accompanied by their wives and children. A few natives with bright coloured turbans were also dotted about, here and there, in picturesque groups. On the cricket ground two nets were set up, and two groups of men were practising as hard as they could, for the Lolapur week was drawing nigh, and it behoved all the Lolapur champions to be up and doing, as the doughty Dholpur eleven were coming down to join issue with them. Behind one of the nets was Bob Anderson in his glory—Bob is police-superintendent of Lolapur—he is also captain of the Lolapur eleven ; and he was then coaching Power, a young civilian who had not been in the country long. Power is a sporting young fellow, he has already bagged his first tiger, is a keen rider, though not as yet very proficient in the saddle, and is fairly good at lawn tennis, but his cricket education has been sadly neglected. As old Bob growls : “Confound this lawn

tennis, none of the youngsters nowadays can play cricket!" Bob is a cricket enthusiast, and so must be forgiven. However, here he was at Power now with "keep your left shoulder up!" "You ought to have played forward then; never play back except at a short pitched ball," etc. And Power did his best to carry out his precepts, for he was anxious to be in the eleven for *the* match of the season. Bob was well backed up in his tutoring by the tall, "hard-bitten," looking man, who in conjunction with two European soldiers was bowling to his pupil. This was Davenport of the Revenue Survey, nearly the best bowler in the eleven, and certainly the steadiest, and there he was now, pounding away at the "young'un" with good length ball after good length ball, while the two "Tommies" slammed them in, as nature dictated, fast and straight, but with not much pitch about them. Davenport was the cricket secretary.

Let us get into the pavilion, and passing through the central door, go through the central passage upstairs, to the back, or northern verandah, which was crowded with all the beauty and fashion of Lolapur for a solemn event was coming off, the question as to

who should represent Lolapur in the lawn tennis match against Dholpur was being decided ; and great interest was taken by all members of the Gymkhana in the matter. The game was being played off in the court nearest the pavilion, and the spectators had, therefore, a first-class view of it. The contending pairs were Duckworth, the young assistant superintendent of police, and Morgan, the assistant judge, on the one side, and Knight and Cox, the quartermaster and adjutant respectively of the native regiment, on the other. Morgan was the Gymkhana Secretary, a sturdily built, middle-sized, man with big sandy whiskers, and spectacles ; he was the keenest and hardest rider in Lolapur and was the master of the "Bobbery Pack."* Duckworth was a tall slim young fellow, only lately out from home, who had hardly yet attained to man's estate. Knight was a swarthy giant of a fellow, powerful to a degree, and first-class at all games and sports. Cox was also dark, but he was small and wiry, a model for a coxswain. The pair were inseparable, and in the course of two years from the date of the game we are now

* A scratch pack composed of all sorts and conditions of dogs.

chronicling, the men were still more inseparably connected : their names were worldborne on the trumpet of fame, for the performance of one of the most gallant deeds ever blazoned on the scroll of exploits achieved by England's sons. Knight met a soldier's death and found a soldier's grave; Cox came out of the *mêlée* to know himself a V.C. man, and a brevet-major; both had their glory, who shall say whose was the best and greatest? Providence ruleth over all. The present game was being closely contested; all were playing their best; for all were anxious to represent their station. The game was finally won—two sets to one, by Morgan and Duckworth. The umpire at the net, that short, stout, purple-faced man, with the iron grey hair, and the heavy white moustache, was the Colonel commanding the station. Peppery to a degree, but a pious God-fearing man, who read his Bible and acted up to its precepts as far as in him lay; his temper depressed him fearfully, but he combated it manfully, as it behoves us all to fight against our besetting sins; every one of us has some particular cross to bear, may we all bear it as valiantly as Colonel Plummer did! He had been through the

mutiny, and had seen a lot of service one way and another, had been wounded twice and had gained a C.B. His men and officers loved him well, and would have followed him anywhere; but this hero, so strong to the outside world, laid aside his command on crossing his threshold, being afraid almost to call his life his own (except when *very* much pressed) in the awful presence of Mrs. Colonel Plummer, C.B. ! We shall make her acquaintance presently. The Collector,* Mr. Musprat, was umpire at one boundary line, the doctor of the regiment at the other; and now was held a solemn and portentous council, the Colonel and the Doctor having very much to say. Who were to be *the* pair to represent Lolapur in the forthcoming struggle? There was no question about Knight, he was out and out the best player; but who should be the second string was not such an easy matter. It lay between Morgan and Duckworth; Morgan steady and unfailing, Duckworth much more brilliant but erratic. The wordy war waxed long and fierce, till at length Bob Anderson, having done with cricket,

* The chief civil (revenue) officer in a district, or as it is sometimes termed a collectorate.

loafed over, joined the conclave, and settled the point almost immediately. "Morgan is the man undoubtedly, he is as steady as Old Time, and won't get put out if Knight poaches, as he will of course, he is always at it. Why not ask him whom he would like to have for his partner?" Knight was called in, and on being appealed to, gave his verdict in favour of Morgan unhesitatingly. So Morgan it was. Young Duckworth was very angry at first, but soon put it in his pipe, and got over it!

By this time the sun had set, rushing down to his rest in a red-hot hurry, and leaving the clouds, so rejoiced to see him at break-of-day, putting on mourning of different hues, not of the earth, earthy, but of the heavens, heavenly; copper, violet, burnished gold, and deep, deep red, turning faintly, but ever steadily, to the deepest, most funereal black, when the last lingering rays of his joyous presence had disappeared; and still the strains (feet impelling) of the band continued, the musicians vanishing into the vast darkness, and the music, seemingly self-inspired, issuing from a circle of twinkling lights. The badminton shed was now the centre of life and move-

ment, "fair women and brave men," you know, were circling round and round, enjoying the inexplicable, yet never-failing, and mysterious charm to be extracted from the worship of terpsichore. All hail to young Fraser of the gallant Blankshires, foremost in every form of fun! Who but he has laid the floor? What cunning devices hath he not brought into play? The dancing drugget of the 70th N.I. has been abstracted from their mess. Fraser had to undergo much before he could get Mrs. Plummer to consent to the sacrilege;—the drugget, laid down with infinite care, tenderness, and skill, by means of long iron hooks, deep rooted in the floor, and engineered to the required smooth level by old newspapers, etc. The dainty little feet, now skimming the result of his labours, find not even a wrinkle to impede, them and glide on untired and unbruised over the elastic surface. Fraser is rewarded! Bright eyes flash thanks to him, and rosy little lips sing his praises. Happy Fraser! Let us inspect the couples. Conspicuous by his height is Knight, who has doffed his flannels for a more suitable costume, dancing with a little fairy, so fair and fragile, like a little bit of

Dresden china, a well-worn simile, but a useful one! They both dance to perfection, and even to the uninitiated in such things it is easy to read the old, old story, over again. Dance away, fair girl and stalwart youth, enjoy happiness while ye may. Two very happy years are yet before you, and then—for one a hero's death, for the other a widow's grief! tempered by the reflected halo of a dead husband's glory, and the bitter-sweet duty of bringing up his son to be worthy of his soldier sire. Here is little Foote gallantly doing his devoir by dragging Mrs. Browne round and round. Mrs. Browne is the wife of the Major, second in command of the 70th. Stout and comely, she may well be described as "fat, fair, and forty." There are several little Brownes, some in England being educated, while two or three had formed part of the infant cavalcade we saw promenading round and round the band-stand earlier in the evening. Long life and happiness to her! May her shadow never grow less! Laughed at, but respected, she, and such as she, perform their parts in life's drama unflinchingly and well, ever facing the world with bright face and undaunted heart, though with many

little mouths to feed, bodies to clothe, and minds to educate, the problem of the depreciated rupee is often very hard to solve. Here again are Morgan and Mrs. Rogers, the wife of the educational inspector, twirling away for dear life. Morgan looks on dancing as a very serious business to be got through thoroughly, as it is his wont to view everything to which he turns his attention; and so, as in his riding, he cranes at nothing, up and down, at the best pace he can command, he goes: woe betide the unfortunate couple who cross his path! Not many of the gentler sex confide themselves to his guidance, it is only the more self-sacrificing mortals, like Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Rogers, his present partner, who are so unselfish as to risk possible damage to dress, and indeed, to limb! And so on, and so on, in kaleidoscopic fashion the dancers pass and revolve, an animated, essentially *living*, pageant. There is something amounting to positive fascination in the mere watching of a valse in progress when the performers are numerous. The changing faces, the whirling dresses, the varied lights, here a glare, and there semi-darkness. One couple glide by in rhythmical union, the man calm and

dreamy, the lady flushed and happy ; here comes another, bobbing up and down like corks in a ripple, the man's teeth clenched, his eyes glaring wildly, his face pale, his partner alarmed and agonised, with crushed feet and dishevelled hair ; here again an animated conversation is being carried on while the cunning couple reverse, reserving wind and preventing giddiness, so as to enable them to enjoy the whole of the fleeting eight or ten minutes set aside as their portion of elysium for the nonce. Truly, a valse in progress furnishes food for reflection and kindly criticism, as well as for mere amusement to the healthy-minded, good-natured, onlooker. I am not sure that he has not the best of it for half-an-hour or so—no more ! Thank goodness, there are pastimes called whist and billiards for grave and reverend seigniors, and awkward or unappreciative youths.

The badminton shed was divided up the centre by a raised platform or dais, for the convenience of the gallery when games were being played. The right, or western half, of the shed was, on this particular evening that we are chronicling, given up to the dancers, let us see what is going on on the other side.

To get thither we must cross the dais, and there, seated in an ample arm-chair, was a stout, motherly looking, elderly lady, of rather a judicial cast of countenance. She was clad in black, was no less a person indeed, than Mrs. Colonel Plummer, C.B. The martinet daughter of a martinet Colonel, she stood greatly on her dignity, and in all things, save strictly military matters (the Colonel would stand no tampering there), ruled the regiment, from the Colonel downwards, with a rod of iron. 'Twas well for the peace of Lolapur that Mr. Musprat was a bachelor ; had there been a Mrs. Collector, there is no knowing what might not have happened. Two suns in the same heavens ! oh ! ye gods and little fishes. Mrs. Rogers was the only lady to challenge precedence, and as such things concerned her not, there was no war of the divinities. That is young Walker, who is talking to the great lady, one of the last batch of the heaven-born.* With an eye-glass, an incipient moustache, whiskers, and

* A term applied in badinage to the members of the Covenanted Civil Service, for whom all Indian places, in the way of fat appointments, are reserved. They have responsible and onerous duties to perform, and, as a rule, "the labourer is worthy of his hire."

a lisp ; conceited to an unsurpassable extent, but beyond that no fool, and he is now enjoying himself, to his utmost, drawing the old lady out to his heart's content, while she herself, with infinite condescension and satisfaction, is giving him her views on things in general.

Here is the whist table. The collector, Mr. Musprat, we have already met ; Mr. Fellowes, the judge, is his partner, a strong-faced man, dark and taciturn. The tall, slight man with the keen blue eyes and freckled face, is the executive engineer, Fergusson by name, a thorough Scotchman, a long-headed, clear-sighted man, whose sayings might be taken for gospel, so careful was he never to commit himself, except, indeed, when he got into difficulties over golf, when his language used to become—well, let us hurry away from the sound of it. Opposite to him is Mr. Rogers, the educational inspector, a man of wide reading, vast research, and keen intellect, he was still, in many things, as helpless as a child. His hair and beard, were quite white, and the face a gentle and refined one. His great amusements were whist, and, *mirabile dictu*, archery. A great mathematician, he was con-

stantly getting lost in the mazes of some knotty problem, or other, to the great detriment of his work, and the derangement of his domestic affairs. His wife (bless her) had to tend him as carefully as though he were still a child, even to seeing that he went about properly dressed, so completely did his abstraction (at times) envelop him. They were a childless couple, a great grief to Mrs. Rogers, but it was believed by many to be the salvation of her husband. In fine, Mr. Rogers was eccentric, but no purer-minded, higher-souled man ever breathed. The four were the *crème de la crème* of the whist players in the station, and the play was really of the highest class. Watching the game is the Rev. Mr. Fitzgerald, the chaplain of the station, genial and hearty, a favourite with all, from the collector down to the smallest drummer-boy in the detachment; an earnest, high-minded Christian man, yet withal not strait-laced, and so having all the firmer hold on the men, aye, and on the rattling young subs., and the other youngsters in the place. A public-school boy, and a 'Varsity man who had played for his college, he was one of Bob Anderson's right-hand men in the cricket-

field, and this aided him in winning the confidence and admiration of the soldiers, for "You see, I likes to see the parson play, Bill ; lor ! how he *do* lay into them 'ere leg-balls !" was an often heard remark when station matches were in progress.

Outside the shed, the gallant 70th dispensed hospitality with a lavish hand, and here were gathered the Colonel, Major Browne, Bob Anderson, Major Winter commanding the European detachment, and a few more men, enjoying their cheroots, and discussing current topics, the festivities of the coming week being uppermost. Dotted about here and there, the gleam of something white might be distinguished, which usually indicated the promenade of couples seeking the cool evening air, after the fatigues of dancing. And then, suddenly, "God save the Queen" rises up to the heavens and everybody starts to his or her feet, and with uncovered heads listen to the soul-stirring strains, and then good-nights all round, and Lolapur and his wife are off to dinner.

CHAPTER II.

SUNDAY MORNING.

IT is early morning ; the scene in front of the Mess House of the 70th N.I. The mess is situated almost exactly in the middle of the lines of houses most affected by the military, and is, therefore, placed most conveniently for those to whom it is most useful. In the grey light two or three men can be seen standing on the steps leading up to the entrance, and on closer inspection, you will find that they are Morgan, Fellowes and Munro, the Forest officers. The last, is a dark, thick-set, taciturn man, learned in botany and various "ologies" of different sorts ; a good shot, a bold rider ; in fact, what is called "a good all-round man." Their horses are being led up and down in the mess compound, and Morgan is already getting impatient, and keeps continually looking at his watch.

"Confound the fellows ! Nearly half-past five, and

no one turned up yet," he mutters. "I won't wait one minute beyond the half-hour."

It is a misty morning. The sun has not yet risen, and Morgan is anxious to make as much as he can of the damp to help the scent. There is a meet of the "Lolapur hunt" to-day; the dogs—one cannot call them hounds unfortunately—have been sent on, and the meet has been fixed at the mess; but at so early an hour few turn up there, but prefer galloping afterwards to the cemetery, where the hounds were to throw off. However, before giving the signal to start, Morgan and his companions are joined by Knight and Cox, Duckworth, Davenport, and Foote. At half-past five precisely, the party ride off, and as they pass Major Winter's house, that gentleman hails them and falls in.

Let us get on ahead and have a look at the dogs. Here they all are, collected at the gate of the cemetery; a varied group. Kangaroo dogs* (a couple), three greyhounds (of several sorts), two fox-terriers (real

* A breed of dogs imported from Australia. They combine speed with courage and strength, and are, therefore, useful in pulling down jackals, and (I have heard) wolves also. They have a strain of the pure bull-dog in them, I believe.

good 'uns) and six or seven *terriers*—woe betide you if you chanced to call them mongrels or “pyes”* in the hearing of any of their owners! All are held in leash, or, at least, are kept on the chain, for, if loose, another version of the story of the “Kilkenny cats” might, with fair certainty, have been predicted. Each group of dogs has its own separate attendant, and many are the shrill yells of “Come in, Boxāre,” “Lie down, Ispik” (Ispik is the dog-boy† for Swift, one of the greyhounds rejoicing in that name), etc., etc. Dogs are barking, and every now and then there is a yelp, caused by the application of a stick, or a bit of chain surreptitiously laid on; while there are non-descript hangers-on, to help in beating, etc., and a numerous array of *ghora-wallahs*‡ make a noisy, bustling mob.

And in juxtaposition to all this stood the cemetery! “God’s acre!” Dark and stern; enclosed by high, grey stone walls; and within, waving high in

* Originally, the ordinary Indian village dog. The term is now applied to all badly bred dogs. It means, in fact, mongrel.

† In India, nearly everyone possessing a dog, is the master also of a *kuta-wallah*, or dog-boy, who generally requires more looking after than the dog, or dogs, which form his osensible charge.

‡ Horse-keeper, or groom.

air, rows of cypress and casnerina,* rustling, whispering, sighing like the sough of the sea on a gently sloping shore, vague, restless, sadness-invoking. Scarcely a month before poor Vernon of the 70th had found his last resting-place there, borne on the shoulders of stalwart Englishmen, followed on foot by all the European males of Lolapur. He had fallen a victim to that dread insidious disease, abscess of the liver, a scourge once so widely spread, so deeply dreaded ; now, in these days of moderate drinking and improving hygienic science, dying away steadily and surely. A British officer's funeral is an impressive and imposing pageant. The slow, steady tramp of the armed men, the arms reversed, the mingling of splendour and of woe, and the mournful, heartrending, beseeching wail of the "Dead March," with its piercing refrains, which seem to ring out : " Ah ! ah ! ah ! the pity of it all " ; the beautiful burial service of our Church, the clash of arms and accoutrements, the sharp, quick cries of military command, the three rattling volleys telling that all is over ! Surely

* *Casnerina equisilifolia*. The beef-wood tree of Australia ; it is not indigenous to India proper, but it has been cultivated throughout the Peninsula, and thrives very well on the coast.

a soldier's burial is a stirring scene, and makes the heart swell, and fills the eyes of the sternest of us all, apart from the thought of *him* who is beyond it all—gone to meet his reward or his punishment beyond there where none of us can follow him. “Fall in, there! Fall in, my lads! Here, good band-master! prithee a lively tune.” The dead is left to the mother that bare him, the living return to this busy, bustling world! Sleep on, sleep on, tired soul, tenderly will the mother guard and keep thy clay till the appointed time. To work and play, dear boys, for such is appointed for *you*. And so the world wags on.

The sun is just up now, and here come Morgan and Co. at a steady trot; some of the steeds are a little fresh, but they are being kept in in hopeful expectation of a good morning. Behind them, and at some distance back too, there is a cloud of dust, which evidently hides more sportsmen from view, as can also be told by the shouts and halloos! These are the youngsters, Fraser, Power, and Walker, White, the assistant engineer, and Reilly and Balfour, brother subalterns, and probationers for the Staff Corps, attached for the present to the 70th

N.I. A joyous, merry group, of happy, fresh English lads—long may the breed continue!

Now that the field are got together, let us have a look at them. Room for the master! Morgan was in pink—the only one sporting it. Rather faded and worn, it had seen many a run in the old country. His horse, a beautiful Arab bay, with black points, handsome as a picture, gentle as a lamb; Morgan was always well mounted. Winter was *the* swell of the party, irreproachable breeches and tops, and well-cut pepper-and-salt tweed coat and waistcoat; he would not have been out of place anywhere; even in the shires. He was mounted on a brown Australian mare, low and level, with long lean neck and small well-set-on head. Fellowes was on a bay Cape gelding, of the stamp now very rarely seen, large looming, power in every limb, awkward to view, but handy as a pony. Munro's mount was a dun kathywari, cat-hammed, not a good 'un to look at perhaps, but a good 'un to go. Knight was riding a grey Persian, which seemed hardly up to his weight; Cox was on an ordinary-looking Gulf Arab, while Duckworth and Walker bestrode pretty Arab galloways.

The rest were mounted on beasts of various sorts chiefly of the genus "tat"*; but Reilly's animal deserves a word—a grey country bred, with rolling eyes, for ever "playing the band," as Reilly himself used to describe it, continually shrieking and roaring at everything on four legs it could discern within a level quarter of a mile.

Morgan now gave the word to move, and accordingly the whole *posse comitatûs* jogged along to some sugar-cane fields about a quarter of a mile further on. Here all the dogs, with the exception of the kangaroo dogs and the greyhounds, were let loose. The animals knew what to do, and after a scuffle or two, only culminating in something approaching to what was serious in one solitary instance dashed in to cover. The exception was a scrimmage between Bully, Duckworth's dog, and the aforesaid Boxer, Reilly's property. Bully was a large black-and-tan terrier, with a dash of Polygar† blood in his

* *Tat* or *Tattoo*: A pony.

† A wandering tribe of hunters; they breed very useful sporting dogs, which are called after their breeders "Polygars." They are fast, faithful, courageous, and savage. True bred Polygars are very hard to obtain, as their breeders dislike parting with them.

veins, while Boxer was really a very well-bred fox terrier. I am afraid that Bully's would have been a very short shrift had any English gamekeeper come across him, lurcher was so unmistakably imprinted on him. However, the dogs were very soon separated, and followed the rest of the pack.

A whimper, followed by shrill yaps, soon tells that something is on foot, and presently a grey form is seen stealing away in the direction of the hills in close proximity. Reilly catches sight of it, and gives vent to his excitement in a piercing "Gone away!" This is too much for Patel's outraged feelings (Patel is the name of Reilly's *Bucephalus*), he lays back his ears, tucks in his tail, gives one wild, vicious kick, and then, taking the bit between his teeth, is off "to catch a train," and the subsequent proceedings interested *that* pair no more. A roar of laughter bursts from every lip, Morgan holds up his hand for silence, but too late; Master Jack has heard it, and in his turn sets off in a hurry; but the wily Morgan has foreseen his game, and has posted the tag-rag and bobtail alluded to in a long line; these, on seeing the jackal's intention, break

into ear-splitting cries, and wave stick and clothes frantically, so Jack, changing his mind, makes for the open. Bully, Boxer, and the rest, hearing the uproar, know its meaning very well, and presently break cover in their turn. When Reilly went careering away, the greyhounds struggled wildly in their leash, and a couple belonging to Munro were slipped by his dog-boy, and went off in full pursuit of that errant John Gilpin. I am afraid that dog-boy had a bad quarter of an hour of it when he next encountered his master. Morgan keeps the field in hand, to give the quarry room to get off fairly, and thus put an end to any chance of his ringing in the sugar-cane. When Jack is a good two hundred yards away, "Ride!" he shouts; simultaneously "Kuta chodo!"* breaks from Fellowes' lips, and away they go, horses, dogs, and men. The solitary greyhound remaining (Cox's) rushes frantically to the front, sees nothing to bother himself about, and promptly takes a bee-line for home! The kangaroo dogs make for their master (Fellowes) and gallop at his heels, well knowing there is some fun on hand. Jack is well away now,

* "Let the dogs go."

and hard riding is the order of the day. Winter, on Henrietta, is well in front, sweeping along with that low easy stride of hers; Morgan is near at hand on Red Rover; and Fellowes on Capers keeps close company. There is no jumping as yet; an undulating plain covered with large loose stones; uncomfortable enough. Suddenly Fury sees Jack, and down go her head and tail as she rushes by her master in pursuit; Rufus, her brother, sees her go, and follows. Up till now Master Jack has been taking it rather easy, but he sees that the situation is growing serious, and puts on the pace; so forward for another half mile, and then Jack disappears from view so suddenly, that the earth seems to have swallowed him up! in another two seconds the dogs are gone too! Morgan knows well what has happened, and gives a pull to his horse; the rest go on, and one after the other take the drop. A big nulla* (dry) crossed the ground, too wide by far to jump, but a nasty obstacle to "negotiate" with all the same. The dogs have thrown up, and look very bewildered, now darting to the top

* *Nula* (nulla). A small river—brook, rivulet, or "water."

of the bank to survey the surrounding country, then rushing back to the bottom of the nulla, wondering where on earth the jackal has got to. The check has let up the survivors of the field, already reduced by two or three. Morgan's foresight now comes in; he has been looking keenly up and down the course of the nulla ever since the check occurred, and presently—there! a long way down he spies Mr. Jack trotting leisurely along. That crafty individual having doubled on reaching the sheltering nulla, and, having stuck to its course for some distance, now leaves it, having, as he thought, made all safe, and makes tracks for his wife and family. With a yell, Morgan is off, and is followed sharply by the rest, by none more sharply than by Rufus and Fury. The jackal hears the uproar, and sails away again as fast as his legs can carry him; vain effort, he will never reach those now distant hills. Fury and Rufus see him once more; a clever double or two, and then all is over, and "Whoop!" proclaims his death. Young Fraser is the first up after the Master, having cunningly divined the intention in that gentleman's

mind, he stuck religiously to him, and did not go for the nulla. Winter, Fellowes, and the rest, are very soon on the spot; but Morgan carefully removes Jack's caudal appendage and hands it to the youngster, who receives it with becoming gravity. Bully comes along presently and gives Jack a friendly tug or two, and Boxer and one or two more shortly turn up also. It is now getting late, and the horses' heads are turned homewards. On the way a patch with bushes scattered about is traversed, and here a hare suddenly jumps up right in front of the dogs, which immediately give chase. This time the ponies have much the best of it, for they can twist and turn so easily, while the bushes are too large for the bigger animals to get over. The run, however, is but a short one, for Rufus and Fury soon press poor puss, and in one of her frantic doubles she goes slap into Master Bully's jaws, and that sapient animal at once trots off with her to his master, Duckworth, in a most lordly manner! The dog-boys are coming up now, having taken short cuts wherever possible, the dogs are secured, and the hunters ride home to tub and breakfast.

Nearly eleven o'clock and the church bells are ringing, not the sweet peal so welcome to English ears in the dear old country, but still a peaceful, familiar sound, recalling many happy times in childhood's days. The church bell (there is only one) jangles rather harshly, and gives voice in a somewhat jerky fashion, owing to the way in which it is pulled by the old church pattawalla, a grey-headed tottering veteran ; the peal from the Roman Catholic Chapel close by, however, is full and mellow, and thus makes up somewhat for the shortcomings of the Protestant place of worship.

The church is a small low building, somewhat in the Norman style, but with a square tower doing duty for steeple, built of very dark-coloured stone ; it presents an appearance of age and antiquity, to which it is not by any means entitled. Surrounded by large and spreading trees, chiefly mangoes, with one huge gnarled old banian* right in front of the porch, encircled by a low stone wall, and coping, the little place looks venerable and peaceful. No tombstones, those usual appendages to a church,

* Or Banyan (*ficus indica*). The Indian fig tree.

exist in the vicinity, but passing through the low square porch which shadows the entrance, and entering the building, a few monumental brasses and tablets are to be seen scattered about the walls. Over the door the colours of the old 150th (H.E.I.C.'s Royal Tigers) are crossed, tattered and war worn. After facing for many years "the battle and the breeze" they here enjoy an honourable and well-earned repose. In the front of the battle, they have danced in the air of Mysore, Bengal, and even distant China ; they witnessed the crushing of that fearful mutiny, which brought about their masters' downfall, only to make England's beneficent rule the stronger and more deeply rooted, resting as it now does in the affections and self-interest of the people ; not, as heretofore, merely on the bayonets and sword points of the conquerors. That mutiny ! Never yet was such a fearful tale disclosed ; the cheek must pale, and the heart must harden, whenever the thoughts and recollections of that dire time arise. Surely, surely, Macaulay had some prompting of the prophet spirit, when he penned those soul-stirring lines :—

“For how can man die better than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his Fathers and the Temples of his gods ;
And for the gentle mother, who dandled him to rest,
And for the wife who nurses his baby at her breast !”

Surely, surely, it was this feeling which prompted all the gallant deeds of England's sons, in those perilous far-off days. The names of Lawrence, Outram, Havlock, and Colin Campbell spring to our lips unbidden, but, there were hundreds more inspired by the same spirit, sustained by the same motives; who fought and toiled as they did ; who gave away their lives gloriously ; who have passed away unreckoned and unknown ; but no! *not* “unwept, unhonoured, and unsung!”

At the east end of the church there is a stained-glass window, the gift of a former Collector of Lolapur, and the seats are arranged down the body of the building in two rows—the ordinary wooden benches with backs and book-rests. It was very little use trying to get to sleep on these seats, though tradition hath it that, now and then, a subaltern has been equal to the feat. In the chancel were the choir and harmonium. The presiding genius at this instrument is Miss Barnett, the daughter of the surgeon of the 70th N I.; the last time we saw her, she was dancing with

Knight, and seemed to like it rather. In the choir, are Morgan, who sings well, young Fraser, and Reilly; while, facing them, Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. Browne are familiar to us. The rest of the choristers are soldiers, and three soldiers' wives, and if the melody resulting from the mixed ingredients is not very entrancing, it is at all events hearty, and well-meant. In the front seat on the right-hand side, is Colonel Plummer, and in the corresponding seat on the other side, are Mr. Musprat and young Duckworth. The civilian element of the station society is not very strongly represented at morning service usually, but all the military men are there, it being Church Parade. The officers of the detachment are in red, but those of the Native Regiment are in the pretty dark blue patrol jackets. Some three-fourths of the sitting accommodation in the church is taken up by the men of the detachment, which is a numerically strong one, and most of the men belong to the Established Church. The clashing of swords, bayonets, and belt buckles, brass buttons, and heavy boots with iron nails is, at times, rather trying to the more devout and attentive worshippers, but as it

cannot be avoided, it must be endured. Mr. Fitzgerald preached a manly straightforward sermon, which even the most unlettered private could understand, and, what is more, the sermon, being practical, and full of sound, wholesome, advice, the most simple hearer could profit by it.

CHAPTER III.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

TIFFIN at the Collector's, and I tell you, it was worth your while to tiffin at the Collector's, let alone to breakfast or to dine there. Rather a small room, light judiciously managed by means of venetian blinds ; snow-white napery, pretty table, good food, and good liquor, and, above all, a first-rate host. The party consisted of Musprat himself, Duckworth, Bob Anderson, Morgan, Davenport, Fraser, Foote, and Cox. The dusky white-robed attendants flit noiselessly about attending to the wants of the sahibs,* bearing dainties in small silver dishes, and replenishing glasses when necessary. Musprat was a rich man, enjoying a high salary ; he was unmarried, and, therefore, without family ties, and besides he had very fair private means ; hospitable to a degree, he

* Gentlemen : English or Native.

delighted in exercising hospitality, and seldom did he sit down to table companionless—at all events, when in Lolapur; he understood the art of good living, without by any means making it the chief pursuit of life, and his tiffins, dinners, etc., were therefore highly spoken of and appreciated from one end of the Presidency to the other. The tiffin party was a mixed one, as we have seen, and perhaps, had Musprat consulted his own tastes in the composition of it, there would have been several changes; however, all at the table had been invited for a particular purpose, to wit, to settle the programme for the Lolapur week; and to arrange the order and nature of the festivities about to take place. Duckworth had nothing to do with all this, and felt rather like what it is supposed the proverbial fly in amber feels, *i.e.*, somewhat out of place, so, when tiffin was over, and an adjournment to cheroots and long chairs in the shady verandah took place, he vanished to his own rooms, and it may with fair certainty be surmised that he there indulged in the stereotyped “forty winks.”

The rest of the party settled themselves down, as hinted at above, with the exception of the painfully

energetic and thorough-going Morgan, who seated himself at a table, ready provided with an ample supply of pens, ink, and paper.

“Well, Morgan,” says the Collector; “I presume that you have got everything cut and dry, and that this meeting is, after all, a mere formality; still, let us hear your proposals, and look out for criticism, my dear boy!”

Hereupon, Morgan produced a note-book, and proceeded to enunciate his ideas; we need not follow the discussion that ensued, nor relate how Fraser chaffed everybody,—not even respecting Mr. Musprat himself—and quizzed everything, causing the peppery little Collector many angry outbursts and incipient apoplectic fits; at length the following programme was drawn up, and agreed to *nemine contradicente*.

Sunday.—Guests arrive.

Monday 7 a.m.—Badminton (Mrs. Rogers to send refreshments); 11.30 a.m., cricket match begins.

Evening, dance at the Mess.

Tuesday 7 a.m.—Pigeon shooting at Gymkhana; 11.30 a.m., cricket match continued. Fancy ball at the Collector's in the evening.

Wednesday.—Europe morning ; 2 p.m. Tiffin at Mess ; billiard match. *Evening.*—Theatricals.

Thursday 7 a.m.—Lawn tennis (Mrs. Plummer to send refreshments) ; 3.30 p.m. Mrs. Rogers “At Home” ; 8 p.m, dinner at Mess.

All this had taken some time to hammer into shape, and it was past four o'clock before the party broke up, and left Mr. Musprat to himself. A quiet hour and a half elapse, well spent in restoring exhausted nature in a long arm-chair. “Sleep, gentle sleep, Nature’s soft nurse!” as welcome to the hard-worked Collector as to “the wet sea boy.” Mr. Musprat well deserved his Sunday’s siesta which he had willingly sacrificed partially in the sacred cause of hospitality.

Clang, clang,—clang, clang, clang,—again sounds the call to worship in the quiet, pretty little church. All sorts and kinds of conveyances may be seen approaching the sacred edifice. Knight’s dog-cart is speeding along swiftly, that gallant warrior driving, with his *Fidus Achates* Cox by his side ; here come Mr. and Mrs. Anderson in a smart tonga,* with a

* A kind of low, broad, dog-cart, drawn by two animals, harnessed curricule-fashion, a capital conveyance for bad roads.

pair of well-matched high-stepping galloways ; behind is the Collector, seated on high, tooling his wagonette horsed by a pair of valuable Australians ; and there may be seen Major and Mrs. Browne, their portly forms comfortably filling up their conveyance, a bullock dhumnie* drawn by a pair of large, fast-trotting, bullocks from Mysore, of the far-famed Amrat Mahal† breed ; a few soldiers are walking across the maidau—all combine to make a pleasing animated scene. Church over, people linger outside the porch to have a few moments' chat together, for there are no very strongly defined cliques in Lolapur, and life runs smoothly along for all ; only, occasionally, very little storms, in miniature tea-cups, arise to disturb the serenity of the station's social stream. Knight very soon detaches Lucy Barnett from the rest, and presently bears her away triumphantly for a little drive in his high dog-cart. Cox does not seem at all put out at his desertion, meaning glances are exchanged

* A covered spring-cart to hold four persons inside, with back and front seats only ; the cart is longer than it is broad by a good deal, and is entered by a door at the back ; it is drawn by a pair of bullocks, while the driver sits in front on an outside seat.

† Or Amrit Mahal, a breed of Mysore cattle famous for size, strength, and swiftness ; in colour they are usually white.

by the little knots of idlers, and kindly looks follow the happy couple as they speed away for their little trip. Kind-hearted, worn-looking little Mrs. Barnett's eyes fill with tears as she gazes after her darling lovingly, although she knows that the stalwart son of Mars has usurped the first place in a soft little heart, which erst was hers by right and usage. Fret not, fond mother ; no usurpation has taken place, the same old love is there, quickened into greater depth and warmth by that new feeling which has come and touched the maiden's heart, turning the fair sweet child into a winsome, loving woman.

The sun is now low in the burning west, a cool faint breeze is blowing, and the congregation, dividing into little groups, move off in different directions. Let us join the party who seem to be under the leadership of kind Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, striking straight across the grass in a westerly direction, they avoid the large iron gates which emphasise the chief means of egress and ingress, and pass through a small wooden turnstile, which admits them at once into Mr. Rogers' compound.* He, good easy man, cares

* Yard or garden ; the grounds attached to a house.

nought for gardening, but his wife is passionately devoted to it ; in fact, not being blessed with children, the love in her nature flows out to her flowers, and, having ample means wherewith to gratify her taste, she has a most beautiful garden.

The house was a regular old-fashioned Indian bungalow, low, many-roomed, spreading over a large expanse of ground, with a thatched roof impervious to the rays of the sun, large, low, dark rooms, thick walls, many doors and windows, and facing due east and west, it was the coolest house in Lolapur. The Rogers were a wealthy couple, so the house was beautifully furnished, chiefly with the old blackwood works of art, daily growing more and more rarely to be met with ; and with Mrs. Rogers' passion for flowers, you may be sure that those lovely adjuncts to comfort and elegance were scattered about in profusion. Arrived at the house, the party seated themselves in front of it, in easy chairs which had been placed, with two or three tables, in readiness by the servants who well knew the customs of their master and mistress. Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Rogers were fast friends, and, as might have been

expected, the former lady and her husband formed part of the group which had followed the Rogers. A little pleasant chat, with a cheroot, and perhaps a mild peg* or two, and then the quiet party has broken up.

* Whiskey or brandy and soda. The name was given, as from the deleterious nature of the compound, each draught was supposed to be equivalent to another peg driven into the imbiber's coffin.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOLAPUR WEEK COMMENCES.

“Together joined in cricket’s manly toil.”—*Byron*.

THE Lolapur week has actually begun, the very acme of the season has been reached, high jinks are the order of the day, cakes and ale, laughter and mirth. The badminton shed is crowded with all the beauty and fashion of Lolapur; the ladies have new frocks on; at least, I think so, I don’t remember having seen them before, and I am more inclined to think I am right from watching the fair wearers’ faces, which, on greeting each other are bland and smiling enough, but which turn on the instant into an “all-eyes” sort of look whenever the *vis-à-vis* passes on or turns away; it is only there for an instant, a brief fleeting moment, but in that moment every detail is indelibly impressed on the fair critics’ mind. Mrs. Smith will tell you, down to the very feather in the hat, what Mrs. Jones wore that morning

in the badminton shed, when you meet Mrs. Smith, ten years hence, and talk of the jolly old times in dear old Lolapur ! It is a wonderful and incomprehensible gift, but it is one with which nine hundred and ninety-nine women out of every thousand are endowed. I think if one threw in the thousandth one, one would not be far wrong ! The ladies, to a woman, look brisk, bright, and fresh (God bless them one and all !); the men, for the most part, appear rather sleepy and dull, and hang about the doors or loiter outside, instead of coming in and doing the agreeable, as it is their, boun- den duty to do. Four or five of the latter are strangers, and they look particularly unhappy, sticking close to their hosts, following them about like shadows ; there is one notable exception, that small, wiry, energetic-looking man with the slightly grizzled hair and beard ; he evidently has met several of the Lolapurites before and talks to them : he even has the audacity to enter into conversation with one or two of the ladies. These strangers are the Dholpur champions, who have come down to try the mettle of the manhood of Lolapur in various sports. Mark Mr. Secretary Morgan ! This is a great day for him, his face

beams with excitement, his spectacles scintillate with pleasure, every individual hair of his sandy whiskers seems to be bristling with importance. With impressive suavity he clears one court, appoints Mr. Musprat and Colonel Plummer joint arbiters, along with himself, of the coming conflict, and calls on the doughty champions of the competing stations to walk round and show their muscle, in other words to enter the arena and commence the games.

Badminton is a capital game, requiring a good hand and eye and a quick foot ; it is not, of course, to be compared to cricket or racquets, or even, perhaps, lawn tennis ; it is like contrasting my lady's palfrey with my lord's war-horse, but it is a capital game, nevertheless. Good for indulging in a hearty laugh, a moderate amount of exercise which can be enjoyed on fairly equal terms with the weaker sex, and remarkably good for the temper ! One is inclined to think that it was a want of this very necessary virtue for the thorough enjoyment of the game, *i.e.*, good temper, which prompted a certain irascible old colonel (it must have been a failing in temper, you see) to pronounce the dictum "all very well for old men and

young maidens." Well, Bob Anderson liked badminton much, and was a great adept at it, and I would have backed him against that same irascible old colonel (who, of course, did not consider himself old ; other people did though) at any earthly game, from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter, for any sum of money you would like to name. The pair selected to do battle for Lolapur were Bob Anderson and Davenport, while Major Hogarth—the enterprising stranger we have already noticed—and Mr. Taylor, R.E., a tall and active youngster, represented the visitors. The battle was well contested, and many and long were the rallies; amid shouting and clapping of hands, the game was fought out, when victory, alas ! went to the Dholpur pair : Anderson and Davenport did their very best ; sharp cut down, after sharp cut down, was returned ; soft insinuating drops met and overcome ; well placed shuttle-cocks cleverly measured and sent back : it was all the work of that little Major Hogarth—active, alert, cool, and collected, he was all over the court, and left his partner Taylor but little to do. The game over, congratulations were showered upon the winners, for the Lolapurites are

generous foes, and the good things provided by Mrs. Rogers having been done justice to, the party broke up to prepare for that more important and arduous contest—the cricket match.

Nearly eleven o'clock now, Bob Anderson and Davenport are already down at the Gymkhana shed, and in company with Atkins, the ground man, and Bill Stubbs, his comrade, they proceed to inspect the pitch carefully. Privates Atkins and Stubbs belong to the gallant Blankshires, an A1 cricketing regiment, and they know their work thoroughly, so that the pair of keen critics are well satisfied with the condition of the ground ; how it has been watered and rolled, rolled and watered, patted down carefully here, the backward grass tenderly coaxed on there, Davenport alone can tell you ; rising up early and visiting it late, I think he could almost reckon how many blades of grass there were on that fateful plot of ground some thirty-five yards long by some six broad ! Presently other men come on the ground, mostly driving, a few riding, and a very few walking ; one of the earliest arrivals is Thompson, the Dholpur captain. He is a rising young civilian of, say, ten years' service, large,

tall, and fair, a kind of makeweight to the Lolapur giant, Knight. We shall find out more about him presently, at least in things cricketical! With him is the Dholpur Major, of badminton renown, and these two sally forth with Anderson and Davenport, and one or two more, and carefully inspect the pitch. On the way back to the pavilion a hurried and whispered consultation takes place between the strangers' captain and his wily lieutenant.

"First-class pitch, true as a billiard table," ejaculates Thompson; "go in first if we win the toss, eh?"

"Most decidedly, most decidedly," returns Hogarth. "The pitch will crumble, if I am not much mistaken, and—look there!" pointing as he speaks to old Surya-mal, as the highest of the hills near Lolapur was called, whose head and shoulders were enveloped in a light clinging, bluish-grey mist, reminding one of those dainty little "clouds" worn by our enslavers of a fine evening when we can tempt them out, under the stars, to "eat the air." *

It is a pretty place to have one's exercise in, the

* (Lawakhana). A saying parallel to our English one of a "constitutional," as applied to taking exercise in the open air.

expansive rolling plain, the tree-clad hills near at hand, and the blue "Cœruleans" * far away in the dim distance. The green grass is waving high over there, but here it is kept close and well-trimmed. There are the new, smart-looking-pavilion, the thatched badminton shed, the pretty grounds, gay with flowers, and two or three white tents pitched for the accommodation of the scorers, and for those who wish to get away into a quiet place, where they can watch the game undisturbed. Suppose the watcher is accompanied by an angel in petticoats, what more delightful place can there be in which to explain the mysteries of the noble game in progress to her willing ears, but, alas! unreciprocal intelligence! (I never yet met the woman who really understood or appreciated cricket). People never *flirt* in Lolapur, oh *dear* no! much too Arcadian! Much too much!

And now the men all get together in an excited group, for the choice of innings is to be tossed for. Bob Anderson produces a brand new shining rupee, and up she goes spinning high in air: "Tails!" cries

* Taken, with many apologies, from the title of Sir Henry Stewart Cunningham's book "The Cœruleans."

Thompson, as the important coin descends ; “ Tails it is ; we go in.” “ Tumble out, boys ; tumble out ; the Dholpur side is in.” Presently the Lolapur eleven, having doffed coats and neck-ties and donned their spiked shoes, emerge in the wake of Bob, who looms large with his pads and gloves, for he keeps wicket for his side. We know most of the team ; there is Bob ; Duckworth proceeds to the southern wicket, and commences bowling imaginary balls at nothing in particular ; from all this it would appear that he is one of the bowlers and is about to open the ball. Cox gets down to short-slip, he is probably on at the other end, then ; Munro, impassive and padded, goes long-stop, Knight is cover, Fraser is point, Reilly is long-off : arrived at his post he commences to walk about on his hands to let off superfluous steam, Power goes long-leg, opposite Reilly, and so on, and so on. Atkins, the ground-man, comes out with a coat over his arm and the bails in his hand to do umpire at one end, Private Stubbs officiating in the same capacity at the other, as the Dholpurites have brought no umpire with them. While the men are settling into their places, a bullock-dhumnie

drives up, and from its depths emerge kind Mrs. Rogers and pretty Lucy Barnett, who hurry away into one of the tents as if ashamed of themselves, and truly Lucy does feel a little conscious, for they are the only ladies there! but she *did* want to see that stalwart young cover-point rush about and stop "Oh! such *dreadfully* fast balls! *so* quick, and hard!" "*How* they must hurt!" "*Isn't* he brave?" That is right, dear Lucy, think your hero the purest gold; exalt him to the skies; let us hope the poor little heart will not be disappointed, and if the hero be not of the pure, pure gold, yet let us hope that he is made of good serviceable metal, which will ring out true in the hour of need. Kind Mrs. Rogers! she does not care a dump for the cricket, bless her, for her old Educational Inspector is not there! she is martyring herself for Lucy's sake, and she shall have her reward; gallant Major Hogarth soon spies them out and drops into a chair close by; knowing all about Lucy's engagement, it is not, perhaps, wonderful that he extols each of Mr. Knight's deeds of fielding power very greatly.

The two first men on the Dholpur side now proceed towards the wicket; that short, sturdy, springy

man is one of the very best bats in the Presidency, his fame has been wafted to palatial "What's-its-name,"* and the benighted† capital of a sister Presidency has had its cricket sward enlightened by his play. Dickens is his name. The Lolapur eleven eye him curiously, and Bob, who knows him of old, hitches up his waist-band and growls in his beard—"He looks doosed fit!"

Tiffin time has come and all the players are seated at the festive board. Mrs. Rogers and Miss Barnett have gone home, and the gallant Major has returned disconsolate and forlorn to the society of his bearded *confrères*. A look at the Telegraph shows the mystic figures 80-5-7; which means that Dholpur has put together eighty runs for the loss of five men, the last of whom claims seven as his

* Bengalis are called "Quai Hai's" (Who's there?) from their custom of calling our "Quai Hai" when they want a servant; the expression has been slightly modified in the text; Madrasis are called "benighted ones"; while people hailing from Bombay rejoice in the appellation of "Bombay Ducks."

† Madras is usually spoken of as the *benighted* Presidency, being supposed to be more backward than either Bengal or Bombay; it is a case of "give a dog a bad name," etc; Madras is quite the equal of her sisters in every respect.

share. Dickens is out at last with thirty-eight to his credit, his downfall having been brought about by a clever catch at point ; Cox has been bowling very well, and Davenport has been fairly successful, while young Duckworth got so knocked about that he had to be taken off. Bob Anderson is seated at the head of the table, he has not put his coat on, and he looks like a regular old Viking with his fair beard and bright blue eyes, broad chest, and general appearance of latent strength ; instead of mead he is quaffing "shandygaff"—the beverage so grateful to followers of "King Willow" ; he looks fairly pleased and contented, nearly all the dangerous men on the other side have been disposed of, and at a moderate expense. I like to see a lot of cricketers : what a manly, jovial, honest set of fellows they are, almost invariably ! A good cricketer and a sneak is nearly an impossibility ; to excel at the game the players must be patient, courageous, clear-headed, and nimble-witted. Look at this specimen now ; are they not a splendid set of fellows, fit to go anywhere, and to do anything ; life and vigour in every movement, pluck in every glance, good fellowship stamped on every feature.

Three o'clock, and it is time to turn out again ; by half-past four all the Dholpur team are done with, the score is one hundred and twenty-eight. Both sides are satisfied ; it might, perhaps, have been better, thinks Dholpur ; it might, perhaps, have been worse, says Lolapur. Of the two, I think, Lolapur feels the happier ; they have got rid of their doughty foes fairly cheaply. Bob is busy at the scorer's tent writing down the order of going in. Here it is :— 1, Duckworth ; 2, Munro ; 3, Anderson ; 4, Fitzgerald ; 5, Knight ; 6, Davenport ; 7, Power ; 8, Fraser ; 9, Reilly ; 10, Cox ; 11, Morgan.

Shortly after tiffin, lookers-on began to arrive. Amongst the earliest comers was Mrs. Anderson, and this time *she* was playing "gooseberry" for Miss Barnett, vice Mrs. Rogers relieved. Major and Mrs. Browne, the Collector, and the rest dropped in one after another, the soldiers of the detachment were there almost to a man—all off duty, that is—and a tolerably large crowd of natives had collected, so, by the time that Lolapur commenced to go in there was quite a gallery.

Duckworth and Munro led off for the home

station ; a well-built young fellow, Neville, of the Dholpur Horse, started the bowling for the visitors ; fast - and straight, off the third ball Duckworth got two. The Dholpur captain was bowling at the other end ; well known as a trundler, his first over was carefully watched. His great height gave him a great advantage, slow left-hand, with a dreadful break both ways. Munro was the first to face him ; sure and steady, the local Scotton played the over out safely, and again Duckworth got the ball ; a three came this time, and presently the young 'un faced the artful dodger. The first ball is well pitched up, young 'un, blood up, gets well hold of it, and sends it away over bowler's head, only to lodge safely in deep field's hands, a scout, sure of hand, placed there in anticipation of this very stroke ! 5—1—5. Duckworth returns sad and disconsolate, and passes Bob Anderson on the way, who vouchsafes him not a word. Bob takes guard, looks carefully round the field, and—whew ! how that broke ! the very first ball he receives removes his bails ! 5—2—0. This is, indeed, a terrible disaster, old Bob out for a duck, the best and surest bat

in the eleven. "How was that?" ejaculates Mr. Fitz-Gerald, as Bob regains the pavilion. "Beat me clean; bowled me neck and crop," says honest old Bob, testily, indeed, but truthfully. I call him an eminently good fellow who makes no excuse for himself when out for no runs in an important match; there are very few men that I know who are capable of such magnanimity. Dholpur are jubilant; two good men gone for next to nothing. Here is a nasty nut for you to crack, my lads. The Padre* occupies the vacant wicket. The cricket now becomes intensely slow; the ladies, having been used to see their reverend pastor send the ball flying to all parts of the field, keeping the game alive in fact, get quite cross with him. "Oh, it is all very well for you to talk," says one little bit of muslin, who shall be nameless, to a mass of flannels, who is sitting by her side talking to her, bat in hand, prepared to fill the deadly breach when the next Lolapur champion falls, "of course that stupid Mr. Munro never hits the ball; but Mr. Fitz-Gerald does. It *is* so silly of him to keep poking at the balls like that!"

* Clergyman.

Meanwhile Munro and Fitz-Gerald are playing the game like a whole library of printed books; the bowling is first rate, and the fielding uncommonly smart, for Dholpur have their tails up, and are working hard to keep the advantage they have gained. Runs are very hard to get, but they come slowly, steadily, surely. Bob is getting very excited as his men keep up their wickets, and it is good to hear him roar, at the full strength of his stentorian lungs, "Well played!" "Run it out!" "Steady, there, steady!" as appropriate occasions for such remarks arise. Well, the long and short of it is, that when six o'clock arrives (the hour fixed on for drawing stumps) Lolapur has made forty-two runs for two wickets, Munro and Fitz-Gerald are still in, the former has made eight runs, the latter twenty-six, and there are three extras. Shouts and cheers greet the pair as they come back to the pavilion, the Padre being *the* hero of the hour. But Bob Anderson goes and gives Munro a hearty slap on the back, ejecting thereby, and with great violence, a newly lighted cheroot from between that gentleman's lips, and says, "Oh! well played, old fellow!" and Munro

has a warm glow about the cockles of his heart, for he knows he has done his side yeoman's service. And it is pleasant to be appreciated, spite of all the well-worn twaddle which directs us not to care twopence for the praises of our fellows. Write me down the man a hopeless misanthrope who does not feel a pleasant tinge at the sound of a word of praise!

· · · "Tum, tum, tiddleum, tum, tum, tiddleum!" —a blaze of lights—the 70th Mess House is the centre of attraction now. The dance is at its height, silk and satin, muslin and tarletan, of varied hues, revolving, entwined with black and red. The Lolapur dance is on, the Native Regiment is showing Dholpur how we do things in our station. The mess-room looks very bright and attractive with the grand old colours on the walls, and decorations, war-like in their design, trophies composed of swords and bayonets, muskets, and spears, tell us we are in the halls of the sons of Mars, while "names, forever to the world's four quarters blown," meet our gaze in every direction, names which the old 70th have assisted in immortalising: "Ghuzni," "Sobraon," "Chillian-

wallah," "Gujrat," remind us of the stout captain who startled the good, quiet, stay-at-home folks in dear old England, but who had the firm trust of England's greatest leader—trust which he fully deserved. Whist is going on in the deep dark verandah, dark no longer now, but brilliantly lighted up; and here in the billiard room are a few men busily engaged taking each other's lives, and what is more, paying the fellow who successfully performs the operation four annas for the favour! Bob Anderson and Thompson, Davenport and Major Hogarth are in an agony. "Hang that fellow Neville," says the fidgety Major; "just look! that is the third time he has been into the supper tent." "My dear Knight," says Bob, intercepting that gentleman on his way to a secluded spot, with Miss Barnett on his arm, "*do* think of to-morrow." Knight has danced every dance, after playing cricket all day. It won't hurt him, my dear Bob, you could have done the same yourself, easily, when you were his age, and your waist was a trifle slimmer! Bob goes off to bed very soon, so as to set his men a good example; Mrs. Anderson, like the good little wife she

is, accompanies him without a murmur, for she knows how keen her husband is on winning the match. Most of the contending eleven soon follow him, only a few young reprobates, like Fraser and Neville, remain on till the small hours.

CHAPTER V.

THE LOLAPUR WEEK CONTINUED.

THE hands of watches are pointing to half-past eight as the first man toes the line to fire the first shot in the pigeon match. Morgan, it is true, had fixed seven as the hour, and there it is, plain as a pikestaff, on the notice board in the pavilion, so that he who runs may read, but "time was made for slaves" is evidently the unanimous opinion of everybody this morning, excepting always, of course, Morgan himself. That estimable individual was on the spot at a quarter before the hour fixed, got his pigeons ready, saw that the traps were all right, and then—"for one mortal hour and ten minutes, by the clock, sir—I tell you, by the clock!—before a blessed soul appeared!" The blessed soul in this instance was Major Winter, who turned up on the stroke of eight, fresh, rosy,

smiling, dressed à la Hurlingham, with a "chokra" * carrying his gun behind him ! Others came trooping in presently, some rosy and smiling like the Major, others decidedly "chippy," according as the "cucumber" over night had agreed with them or not. The four who were shooting for Lolapur were Mr. Musprat, Major Winter, Fellowes, and Munro, a precious stiff lot to beat ; every one of them "a one in two cartridges" man after quail or snipe any day in the week. The Dholpur lot were Major Hogarth, Neville the bowler, and two others. Lolapur won the match easily, killing twenty out of twenty-four birds, Dholpur only brought twelve to grass ; the conditions were four a side, six birds apiece, twenty-five yards rise ; Musprat killed all six of his birds, Fellowes and Munro five each, whilst Major Winter had to be content with four. On the Dholpur side Major Hogarth got five, Neville one, and the two other men three each. I am afraid Neville had not been careful in the matter of the cucumber ! So now the events stood one each—badminton

* Boy ; an epithet used to designate male-servant, without much respect to age.

to Dholpur, pigeons to Lolapur. No ladies were present, even if they had the not excuse of a late night, few would have cared to look on; it is a noticeable fact that all the gunners were bachelors. Trap shooting has its charms, undoubtedly; but, look at it in any light, it is, to put it mildly, *rather* a cruel sport.

Everyone comes down to the cricket ground early, for time cannot be cut to waste if the match is to be finished, and both teams are playing as true sportsmen, one and all. Punctually at eleven, Munro and Fitz-Gerald, the not-outs of yesterday, emerge from the pavilion and proceed to the wickets; it is the lot of Munro to get the first over, and, steady as Old Time, he plays as carefully as ever:

“Block, block, block, at the foot of thy wickets, O Scotton!
And I wish that my voice could utter my *utter* boredom.”

sings, or rather roars, Thompson as the field change their places after the over; but it is of no use, oh! man of the artful dodges, that forester impassive, is no easier to *chaff* out than he is to *bowl* out. There has been a little rain during the night, and the pitch is a shade easier. Whether this is really the case, or whether the worthy Padre thinks the game might with safety

be forced a little more, certain it is that he gets busy very soon, and scores rapidly, being especially hard on the leg balls, his favourite stroke. Why, oh why ! aren't the ladies present to see him hit ? The end comes soon, though ; he gets too much under one, short leg gets to it, and out he goes ; he has added twenty to overnight's score ; total forty-six, a rattling good innings—64-3-46—a great improvement since the fall of the last wicket. Knight is the next man in and he keeps the ball going, driving and cutting clean and hard, he makes twenty-two and then the wily Dholpur captain bowls him slick. The innings finally close for one hundred and fifty-four, Davenport and Power both got into double figures, Davenport seventeen, Power twelve, Munro, seventh wicket down, scored fifteen ; Morgan's was an amusing, if brief, innings, the first ball he got he pulled off his middle stump to square leg for five, he did not get another chance, the next delivery proving fatal to his partner, Cox ; but he was happy, he had got his swipe, had felt that exquisitely rapturous feeling tingling from the palms of his hands to his shoulders, as he met the ball full and square, with the face of his bat just

as it was swinging at its fastest ! A lovely feeling, oh my masters !

There is yet an hour for play before tiffin, and Lolapur loses no time in turning out. Dickens and Major Hogarth open the second venture of Dholpur, and each in his own peculiar way means business. Dickens settles down almost at once, there is no doubt but that the pitch has improved, and the crack takes full advantage of it, playing patiently, yet confidently, he never loses an opportunity of punishing a loose ball ; the Major, on the other hand, is like a parched pea on a frying-pan, dodging in and out of his ground, running sharp runs and stealing byes whenever he can, laughing and chaffing ; he is trying to demoralise the field, I am afraid, is that wicked, worldly old Major ! Look ! here he plays one softly to point's left hand and pretends to start for a run ; whiz ! goes young Fraser at the wicket, and the ball travels away into the country past short-leg, and three is added to the score sheet. Bob abuses Fraser roundly ; he does not like it, these two have rubbed off the balance against their side, and things look serious. A hurried consultation with Davenport, Fitz-Gerald

also being called in, and Cox is ordered off and Duckworth is put on ; Dickens cuts his first ball prettily for three, but the second sends Hogarth's middle stump flying ; Bob draws a long breath of relief as he sees the perky little warrior's back receding towards the pavilion. Nothing noteworthy occurred before tiffin ; when they sit down for that meal, Dholpur has scored fifty-three, of which Dickens has made no less than thirty-two, and he seems as if he were going to stay till Doomsday. Both sides are fairly contented ; the match is tolerably even at present, anybody's game as they all assure one another :

“ Take the goods the gods provide ye,
The lovely Thais sits beside thee.”

That is the frame of mind most of the party are in, and as for the Dholpur Major, there is no holding him, full of quips and quirks and fun. Tiffin is got over quickly, and on they go again ; runs are coming fast, Dickens is playing splendidly ; Bob takes off his gloves and pads, he is going to resort to a double change of bowling, putting himself on instead of Cox, while the Padre undertakes the other end. Bob opens with a wide ; the second ball, a terrific shooter, spread-

eagles Dickens' wicket, and a wild yell of delight breaks from every Lolapur lip ; the unbidden, spontaneous, expression of universal heartfelt joy ! Friend and foe unite in according to Dickens a genuine ovation, he has played splendidly, and well deserves the applause that greets him and accompanies him on his way back to the pavilion. Horrid bad luck for Dholpur to get him out by a fluke like that. After his departure the wickets tumble quickly enough, and the innings terminate for one hundred and thirty-five, of which Dickens' share amounts to fifty-two.

One hundred and ten runs to make to win, and barely two hours to get them in ; Lolapur can scarcely hope to do it. Fitz-Gerald and Knight are the first pair deputed by Bob to open the innings this time ; both are thoroughly on their mettle, they have a very difficult game to play, make the runs if possible, yet not be rash. Thompson they cannot get hold of, he is much too dangerous to be trifled with, but the others they lay into merrily, and ten succeeds ten with fair rapidity on the telegraph board ; it is an exciting time, even the ladies begin to get breathless as the hands steal round the clock steadily, and the score

steadily mounts up too. Fifty is up now, and only three-quarters of an hour left ! The batsmen are well set ; Thompson, as a *dernier ressort*, tries Hogarth with lobs ; bravo the Major ! Knight rushes in at his first ball, misses it, and is stumped ! 53-1-26. Duckworth comes in, his chief said not a word to him, "no use flurrying him," thinks he to himself, and in so thinking he made a great mistake, which went far towards saving the match for Dholpur. Duckworth was a very fair bat indeed, and usually a very free hitter ; having got out in the first innings through letting out, he determines to be very cautious this time, and consequently Munro might just as well have gone in. Well, well, one cannot put old heads on young shoulders. Thompson very soon sees what Duckworth is up to, and takes Hogarth off after a couple of overs, the run getting is checked, which is the great thing ; Fitz-Gerald goes on hitting whenever he gets the chance, and plays the game grandly, but his efforts are vain, time is up, and some twenty are still wanting of the hundred and ten runs required, so the match ends in a draw very much in favour of Lolapur, and also very much to the disgust of Bob ; he has not the

heart to pitch into the young 'un then, although he points out the error of his ways to him afterwards, for the big man had a fatherly sort of a feeling towards his young assistant—those great big powerful men, more often than not, have the very softest and kindest of hearts. “Ought to have gone in myself, or sent Davenport in,” he soliloquises, and he calls himself a naughty name which we won't repeat.

The Residency was to be the centre of attraction to-night, for it is the scene of the Fancy Dress Ball, *the* event of the Lolapur week, at least so the ladies unanimously pronounce it, and who shall dare dispute their verdict? For ever so long past, that ball has been the theme of conversation and absorbing thought to every petticoated person in Lolapur. Of course, nobody knows what anybody else is going to wear—that is, outwardly; every individual lady, has, however, told every other individual lady in the place what she is going to wear, having first sworn her confidante to inviolable secrecy, this only to find out herself what she is going to wear, and so, of course, you know, no one has the slightest idea as to what costumes are to be worn, of course not. So, no sooner had the

last ball of the match been bowled than there was a general stampede of fair ones, rustling of dresses, putting on wraps, etc. "Oh, Mr. Foote! do please find my husband!" "Mr. Fraser, will you kindly tell Major Browne that I have gone home?" The worthy Major was enjoying a whiskey and soda and a cheroot, in congenial company, in the refreshment tent; I am afraid that most of the husbands met with the same treatment, and there was a sort of light-hearted way with those left behind, you know; they tried hard to look for the nonce just like their bachelor brothers! almost—there was, perhaps, a slight air of servitude still clinging to them. Padre Fitz-Gerald got cheered to the echo by the men, but the ladies—bless them—never bestowed a thought on him. The heroes of the match, Dickens and Fitz-Gerald, Thompson and Munro, might just as well have been Anderson or Duckworth or Morgan, or anybody, for all that it mattered to the women.

The Collector received his guests at the top of the broad flight of steps which led up into his spacious verandah; the grounds were brilliantly lighted up, Chinese lanterns dotted about amid the trees, tents

pitched, lights everywhere. Foote, Balfour, and White, and a party from the Blankshires, have been hard at work all day, and have transformed the large centre room of the Residency into a veritable fairy palace, while you may be sure that the floor was well looked after. Mr. Musprat was in his element, he was got up in his political uniform ; he did not have many opportunities of airing it, and he was very proud of it, thought it suited his "peculiar style of beauty." "Good wine needs no bush, sir," as he remarked, later on in the evening, in a confidential sort of way to his brother magnate, the Colonel, who was in his uniform. "Political agent of Jaffirabad ! Cannot go in for masquerading very well, eh, Plummer, can we ?" And the stout old Colonel agrees with him.

Here they are, all assembled, a dazzling sight. Bob Anderson is figuring as "Richard Cœur-de-Lion," and looks very well in chain-armour, surcoat, helmet and shield, with the three leopards ; he strikes one as rather funny though, later on, when he has doffed his head-piece, and is reclining in a long arm-chair, with the inevitable cheroot, fighting his "battles o'er again" with the rival captain Thompson, who is dressed

as a French cook. Mrs. Anderson is very pretty as Queen Berengaria, with her lovely hair plaited, hanging down her back, the long curious peaked head-dress affected by fashionable ladies of the time that she was representing, the pretty flowing dress, and funnily pointed shoes. Mr. and Mrs. Rogers were attired as Friar Tuck and Maid Marian, as became Toxopholites. Maid Marian looks very charming in a short green kirtle, black velvet jacket, and red waistcoat; both carry bows, and have baldrics with quivers full of arrows across their shoulders. Miss Barnett, as "Dresden China" (by particular request of the gallant Black Brunswicker knight), in pink and blue, and powdered hair, looks bewitching; one feels inclined to put her up on the mantel-piece under a glass case. Mrs. Browne is in black net with spangles, and calls herself "Night," while the Major presents himself as "Policeman 92 X," and suits his character. Major Winter as "Charles Surface" is *the* man's success in the way of dress that evening. The third Major, Hogarth, was in motley; he ought to have been ashamed of himself at his years, but he wasn't. Young Walker turned up in ordinary evening costume, which upset

his quicksilver host not a little: "He might have taken the trouble to make himself up a bit, I think," he mutters; and, between ourselves, I think he might.

Well, well, all things must come to an end at last, and the Lolapur fancy dress ball proved no exception to the rule. One by one the guests departed reluctantly, each one thanking the hospitable Collector profusely, and thereby recompensing that worthy gentleman a thousandfold for all the trouble and expense he had been put to.

Mr. Walker had gone to bed early, he felt rather out of it in his plain choker and swallow-tails amidst the gay throng, each individual member of which had gone to some trouble, and in most cases to a little expense, to put on garments befitting the occasion. It came home to Walker that he had made a little mistake in not taking some trouble also; the giver of the feast was his own immediate chief, and it struck him suddenly that, perhaps, his no dress was rather out of place under the circumstances, so he went to bed a sadder and, let us hope, a wiser man. A small knot of the younger fellows get together under the porch, after having said "good night" to

Mr. Musprat, and a good deal of whispered talk and suppressed laughter is indulged in. Here are Reilly and Fraser, Power and Duckworth, Balfour and White, with two or three more, among whom, I grieve to say, are numbered Morgan and the Dholpur man, Thompson. There is evidently something of a very amusing nature under discussion, for there are continued smothered peals of laughter ; as for Reilly, he seems to be ill, he has his handkerchief stuffed into his mouth, and is doubled up with violent contortions, as if in exquisite pain. At length the knot dissolves, and the component atoms move off rather quietly and stealthily, I might almost say guiltily. The high road outside the Collector's gate being gained, the party reunite, and we can now hear something of what is going on. Alas ! alas ! it is nothing less than a malicious plot to draw poor Walker ; his house is not very far off, and thither the youngsters direct their course. Up the steps they go, noiselessly enter the house, and penetrate into Walker's bedroom ; he, poor youth, is sleeping peacefully, and his tormentors commence operations by quietly surrounding the bed, and then awakening their victim by means of most

unearthly yells, delivered in unison, and with great precision and force. Morgan and Thompson did not go inside, but remained in the verandah, on guard as they said ; the fact being that they did not quite like to go the length the others seemed determined upon, and yet they could not for the life of them help looking on at the fun. " We'll just keep handy and see that the youngsters don't go too far," that was the flattering unction they laid to their souls. Walker started up, was seized and made to stand in the centre of the room, very much dazed and astonished at the sudden nature of the proceedings. A mock court-martial was hurriedly convened, Reilly was appointed president, and installed as such in a comfortable arm-chair. The charge against the culprit was want of due respect to the ladies of the station, in not having provided himself with a suitable costume for the fancy dress ball given by the Collector, to wit, Mr. Musprat. The accusation was supported by several witnesses, and then the prisoner at the bar was called upon for his defence ; he was understood to say that the whole lot of them were fools, and he wished that they would shut up with their larks and leave him

alone. Now, Walker had a pair of brand-new whiskers, which he cherished greatly, and, very unfortunately for him, right in front of the venerable judge, Mr. Reilly, a pair of brand-new razors lay on the table. "Gentlemen of the jury," said the sapient Rhadamanthus, "the prisoner is clearly guilty of the offence laid to his charge, and he has greatly enhanced the magnitude of his offence by the use of violent language, amounting to contempt of this honourable court. The sentence of the court is that he be deprived of his whiskers." A roar of laughter burst from the poor boy's delighted tormentors; his dearly beloved whiskers to be reft from him! The Rape of the Lock was nothing to it! By a violent effort he shook off Power and Duckworth, who were holding him by the arms, and darted into the verandah—alack-a-day! right into the extended arms of Thompson. "Oh, beg your pardon, I am sure," says that unabashed person; so his pursuers have the lad again, and carry him back kicking and struggling. The learned judge had himself taken part in the chase, much to the detriment of his shins, for he had run up against a pot full of tar, which had upset him at full length on the floor.

Reilly was equal to the occasion ; regaining his feet, he shouted, " He tried to run away ; therefore, the sentence is doubled, one whisker is to be cut off, the other tarred !" The sentence was duly executed, one whisker *was* tarred, the other cut off with a pair of scissors, the prisoner struggling so violently under the operation that a razor was deemed unsafe. Then the court left the offender and went home and slept peacefully, which, I am afraid, is very much more than Mr. Walker did. Mr. Thompson also slumbered sweetly ; he ought not to have done so,—to be sure he had the cheek of a brass horse, which is said to be *the* most brazen thing under the sun.

CHAPTER VI.

THE END OF THE LOLAPUR WEEK.

EVERYBODY in the station, resident or visitor, indulged in a Europe morning after the fancy ball, that is, nobody thought of getting out of bed till eight o'clock ; the bugles had sounded "no parade to-day," that call so sweet to the sleepy, weary warrior. I remember hearing a story of a war-worn veteran, who after he had retired from active service, still used to have himself called punctually on the stroke of five, merely for the pleasure of being able to say " Hang the reveille ! no parade to-day for me ! " and then wrap the blanket snugly round him, boys, and off again to the land of Nod, till he could get up at his own sweet will and word of command. I said everybody. Mr. Walker was up early I may say very early ; he did not go to bed again after his rude awakening in the small hours, but spent the time

in pacing up and down frantically, nursing his wrath and swearing vengeance on the ravishers of his whiskers. Every now and again he paused in front of the looking-glass to look on the ruins of his pristine favourites. At daylight, hot water, soap, and alas! alas! the brand-new razors, to remove the last vestiges of the dear departed, were requisitioned; then he set off to lay his tale of woe at his Collector's feet. He had to cool his own for a considerable length of time before Mr. Musprat appeared, but his wrath was by no means appeased by the delay. The Collector was not a little astonished on discovering who his early visitor was. He had not the slightest inkling of what had occurred, and as the awful story was blurted out, illustrated, as it was by the narrator's hairless cheeks, he turned positively purple, his eyes seemed to be starting out of his head. In fact, Mr. Walker was quite touched by the apparently suppressed wrath of his chief. Emboldened by the show of sympathy, he began to dilate upon his wrongs, till the Collector could contain himself no longer, but gave away to the most unrestrained fit of laughter, peal after peal escaping

from him, till, fairly exhausted with the violence of his mirth, he sank back breathless, speechless, in his chair. Mr. Walker was on the high horse at once, talked about writing to the Private Secretary, the Senior Member of Council, the Chief Secretary, the Commissioner, the Accountant-General, the Commander-in-Chief, and so on. However, after a bit, Mr. Musprat recovered his gravity, made the boy stop to breakfast, fed him, pampered him, scolded him, and comforted him. Finally Walker went away in a very contented frame of mind, directed his course to the mess, had a hearty laugh over the whole affair with all the other youngsters, was voted a regular trump, regained, nay, doubled, his former popularity. Last, but not least, he acquired by his conduct perfect immunity from any future drawings, with permission to grow as many hirsute appendages as he "jolly well liked." All this he owed to Mr. Musprat. Had Walker gone his own way, his life would have become an intolerable burthen to him, by reason of the tricks which his contemporaries would infallibly have played off upon him.

There was a goodly gathering at the mess that

morning, for several of the Dholpur men had to return to Dholpur, among others Dickens, since they could not get longer leave, and this is why the cricket match had been squeezed into two days. Two or three tongas are waiting in front of the mess to convey the visitors to the railway station, distant about four miles, inside the vehicles are cricket bags, Gladstone bags, etc., etc.; presently the owners of these impedimenta sally forth and prepare to insert themselves between them, under them, on them, somehow or other. The Colonel was there and both the local Majors, the Dholpur Major was there, of course, it goes without saying, Bob Anderson, Fellowes, in fact nearly everyone. The Collector could not get away, he was too busy, arrears had accumulated during the past two days' festivities. Just before the carriages drove off, Bob called for three cheers for the Dholpur eleven, and they were most heartily given, "one cheer more" from Morgan; "three cheers for Dickens," shouts Davenport, and the sturdy little cricketer turns quite red at the unlooked for compliment; "three cheers for the Padre," he cries in his turn; "three cheers for the ladies," this from Thomp-

son, who had already led the way in cheering the Lolapur fellows ; “one cheer more,” yells excitedly the little Major. “For they are jolly good fellows” Reilly begins, but is promptly sat upon for his levity ; and so the tongas roll away in a cloud of dust amidst cheers, laughter and good fellowship.

Tiffin at the mess, and ladies, for once in a way, grace the festive board, and very nice they look too, as they always do, of course ; it would not do for them to come to mess perpetually—“at least, some of them,” mental reservation on the part of Balfour, who would like some of them to come always. Oh verdant young Balfour it would never do : “too much familiarity”—“gracious goodness ! what is the fellow saying ?” *tantæne animis cælestibus iræ?*—tea-cups and sugar-tongs ! The table is very prettily got up, the gymkhana garden has been robbed to its very ultimate rose, and Mrs. Rogers has been a large contributor to the floral wealth that decks the festive board. Tiffin takes a long time under circumstances such as these ; bright eyes and rosy lips, soft voices and merry jests, champagne fizzes, and soda-water pops, and the moments fly swiftly by. However, a

move is made at last into the billiard room, Davenport and Knight are to represent Lolapur, while that versatile Major Hogarth and young Neville uphold the honour of the strangers. Davenport, as at most things he turns his attention to, is steady and reliable ; Knight is very brilliant but uncertain ; Hogarth and Neville both play well and have their wits about them ; the game is two hundred and fifty up. None of the players is anything very extraordinary, thirty is a very decent break for any one of them, so it follows that the game is rather protracted, and, I am afraid, if we except some half-dozen persons, not much interest is taken in the varying fortunes of the struggle. In the end, Dholpur won by twenty-five points, so that the fight was very even ; had Knight been able to give his undivided attention to the task he had in hand, the result might have been different, but Lucy Barnett looked so distractingly pretty upon that high dais, it is no wonder that he was slightly distracted also. Then the assembly broke up, and the ladies hurried away home for a little rest after all this unwonted dissipation.

The next gathering ground of fun and frolic was the reading and recreation room of the European detachment. A stage had been erected here under the direction and constant supervision of Major Winter, and Messrs. Fraser and Foote, of the Blankshire Regiment. Both the younger gentlemen possess very fair histrionic talents, and it has been decided upon by them and their worthy C.O., that their own particular contribution to the merrymakings on hand shall be amateur theatricals, no pains having been spared to make the affair a success. A capital temporary stage has been erected, and scenery improvised, several of the men in the detachment working at it with a will and with gusto. A tent has been pitched close at hand, in which a first-rate cold supper is laid out, and refreshments galore may be obtained by importunate thirsty souls. Thespian talent beyond the limits of the detachment has been called in to aid, and the curtain is just going to ring up for the screaming farce, entitled, *Down among the coals*. The house is crowded in every part; in the front seats are all the upper ten of Lolapur with their guests, in the middle are the non-commissioned officers of the

gallant Blankshires, the clerks, overseers, etc., with their wives, and in some cases their children, one or two of whom are of very tender years. Later on, during the performance, one of these lifted up its voice and wept, calling down upon its poor little self, and its embarrassed mother, sundry uncomplimentary observations from the gods (many members of the detachment who are crowded into the back seats). Remarks are made such as "Take that 'ere musical box 'ome!" "Shut yer pertatur trap, will yer." "Will yer sinner keep quiet; it's the detachment's henter-tainment, hain't it?" However, the gods are in a very good humour, and therefore behave well.

Here is the programme :—

THEATRE ROYAL, LOLAPUR.

PART I.

Screaming Farce.

DOWN AMONG THE COALS.

Dramatis Personæ.

Nubbles (a coal merchant)	Mr. FOOTE
Sir Jonathan Samphire	{ an amateur geologist }	Captain SMYTHE
George Jargery	{ of the Grenadiers, in love with Martha }	Mr. KNIGHT
Bob Sawyer (Sir Jonathan's servant)	Mr. FRASER
Lady Samphire (Sir Jonathan's wife)	Mrs. ROGERS
Martha Nubbles	{ Nubbles daughter, in love with Jargery }	Miss BARNETT

Everybody knows the plot ; how Sir Jonathan was firmly convinced that coal could be converted into diamonds, if one could only discover the process ; how the crafty Nubbles profits by the old man's folly and credulity ; how Lady Samphire remonstrates with her husband, intercedes with Nubbles not to ruin the silly old man, and how she finally exposes his (Nubbles') trickery ; how Bob Sawyer helps her with all his might ; how George Jargery was found among the coals, and how he persuades the hard-hearted coal merchant to sanction his union with the lovely Martha ; and how everything winds up satisfactorily, even to the repentance of the vile Nubbles, and the awakening of the blundering old baronet to the silliness of his ways. Well, it was all told over yet again on the boards of the Blankshire Theatre Royal, Lolapur, during the week, of which a true and detailed account is now being given. Mrs. Rogers acted capitally the indignant wife, the imploring suppliant, the triumphant guardian angel. Lucy Barnett looked very pretty, but this was her first appearance on these or any other boards, and so a great deal must be forgiven her on account of her youth, her inexperience, and her beauty. Captain Smythe was decidedly the

best among the men ; he was capital as the crack-brained enthusiast, the fool befooled to the top of his bent, the timid, tearful husband ("after all the 'school-master' must have a bad time of it," whispers one to the other in the front seats, but they do it all in joke, for a more gracious, tender woman than the fair actress never breathed, and, what is more, everybody who knows her knows it) ; in fine, he showed himself to be quite in the front rank of amateur performers. His fame had preceded him (he had but lately joined the 70th N.I., taking poor Vernon's place), but this was his first appearance before a Lolapur audience. Foote, as Nubbles, acted an ungracious part very well, especially where, when driven to bay, he at first defiantly opposes his traducers, and is then gradually brought to his knees ; the transition from one phase of mind to the other, being very cleverly portrayed. Bob Sawyer was the funny man of the piece, and was, therefore, highly applauded by the gallery, the scene in which he discovers George Jargery "down among the coals," and drags him out into the light, being specially appreciated. Knight was Knight, and there is an end of him.

Part II. was a kind of variety entertainment, con-

sisting of songs and dances, given by some of the men ; highly interesting to their comrades, and very amusing in their way, but scarcely admitting of detailed description. The good things provided by the officers of the detachment were done full justice to, and the party broke up comparatively early ; Major Winter was a delightful host, courtly and *dé-bonnaire*, with the manner of the old school, not often met with in this go-ahead, practical age.

Next morning the venue is again changed to the Gymkhana, the business on hand being the lawn tennis match ; Knight and Morgan are, as we know, the Lolapur champions ; Major Hogarth (again the Major, you see,) and young Leslie enter the lists for Dholpur, the same pair who won at badminton ; Dickens, had he been present, would have played, the Major was taken "*faute de mieux*." Knight and Morgan had practised together several times since it was finally decided that they were to represent the station, and had got well used one to another, Knight playing up at the net, while Morgan looked after the back line. Lolapur won both sets easily, 6-3 ; 6-2. I think Dholpur would have done better to have played

Thompson instead of the Major, but Thompson was a bit of a *fainéant* at tennis, whereas Hogarth was as keen as mustard at everything. So victories were divided, badminton and billiards to Dholpur, pigeon shooting and tennis to Lolapur, while the cricket match was drawn. Dholpur was a much larger station than Lolapur, in fact the former was a regular cocked-hat and brass-collar sort of place, with Governors and Commanders-in-Chief, Members of Council and Secretaries to Government running about quite tame and domesticated ; of course they could not get all their best men to come away, don't you know? still, as things had turned out, every one was satisfied, and that was a great comfort.

Mr. Rogers' compound presents a very animated sight at about five o'clock this afternoon ; all the elements of a successful garden party are present, green grass, pleasant lights and shadows, pretty faces and pretty dresses, lively music (that poor band ! the Lolapur week was no holiday to the men composing it, but as they were well recompensed for the extra work required of them, they did not mind it much), and a genial host and hostess. Several ladies wear those pretty

“Sari”* dresses, while one or two are in Tussore† silk;—time was, when, if you were expected to wear a Tussore silk, it formed very good grounds for a divorce, or at all events, for a judicial separation, but “*nous avons changé tout cela* ;” they are very much worn at home in this year of grace, and so will do for Lolapur—but we are digressing. The scene was a very pretty one; as we have already seen, the Rogers’ house was an essentially Indian one, the real conventional bungalow of the “Harry and his Bearer”‡ type, don’t you remember? The large porch supported by the four orthodox white massive chunam§ pillars, the blackwood chairs and sofas dotted about in convenient situations, the lovely garden, so prettily laid out and so well kept up, the inevitable white tents, the long stretch of greensward beyond, and there at the end three veritable straw targets set up, reminding one of Bath or Cheltenham. Mr. Rogers is trying to induce

* The garment worn by the women of India; in the text the word is applied to the material of which “Saris” are made; cotton or silk; it makes up very well in the European style.

† Silk made from the silk of the Indian or Tussore worm. (*Antheraea Mylitta*).

‡ A well-known Anglo-Indian tale for juveniles

§ Lime; stucco, made of calcined shells.

some one to shoot. It is rather dangerous work; Reilly has had a try and very nearly transfixed an innocent pattawallah, who was standing well out of harm's way as he thought, poor man! some three or four paces to his (Reilly's) right rear. Talking over the incident later on in the evening with his brother knights of the belt, the man remarked in a matter-of-fact, quiescent sort of manner: "The sahib-logue* are very like monkeys, especially the young sahib-logue; you never know what they will do next," a remark which stamped him among his confrères as a philosopher of the highly reflective order. Mr. Rogers finally gets a reluctant party together, these are the seniors: the juniors after witnessing Reilly's escapade, are only too eager to go and do likewise; but it is a noticeable fact that as each archer novice prepares to draw the arrow to the head, the other novices, as if by clockwork, fall into a kind of queue well behind him. Miss Barnett goes off with Mrs. Rogers, and that lady being a very skilful archeress, one would have thought that hints from her would have been quite sufficient, but no, it is Mr. Knight upon whom devolves the

* Or Sahib-tôk; English gentlemen.

duty of "teaching the young idea how to shoot." It is really wonderful how often he has to take Miss Lucy's hand to show her how to hold the bow, to press her thumb in order to place it in the proper position for directing the arrow, he even straightens her shoulders into the proper attitude; but then,—engaged young men are allowed much latitude. Young Balfour determines to get engaged at the first convenient opportunity, and teach the fair divinity position-drill too. But the boy was young, you understand, young and green, young and green! Archery is not the only diversion provided, the garden well repaid inspection, with its lovely flowers, its beautiful foliage plants, its cool delicious fernery and rare orchids; a very pleasant occupation involving some expenditure of time to perform thoroughly. With Mrs. Rogers' garden party, the gaieties of the week may be said to have ended for the ladies, the men had still to undergo the farewell dinner.

There are forty-five men dining to-night at the mess of H.M.'s 70th N.I. The table is, therefore, a long one, and it and the massive sideboards are covered with all the silver plate belonging to the regi-

ment ; the centre-piece is very handsome, a silver figure of a private of the regiment in the uniform of fifty years ago, standing on an ebony pedestal, round the base of which are silver drums, ensigns, muskets, etc. ; the names of the battles in which the regiment has taken part are engraved on the pedestal, and on one side a silver plate tells that it was presented to the corps by a very illustrious personage on his appointment as Honorary Colonel. Scattered up and down the table are numerous silver cups and tankards, the gifts of past and present members of the mess chiefly, presented on promotion, on joining the regiment, on leaving it, and so on. One was a peculiarly interesting token, a massive silver Cutch-work* bowl, the memento of an old Subledar-Major† who had risen in the regiment from recruit boy to be the principal native officer in it, and who had retired from it full of years and honour ; he used every now and again to revisit the old Paltan,‡ the home of his boyhood,

* Silverwork done in the province of Cutch, or after the fashion of the work done there ; the engraving is wonderfully fine and beautiful.

† The highest rank in the British Indian Army which can be attained by a native

‡ Regiment.

the arena of his life's labour. The gentleman seated at the head of the festive board is Surgeon-Major Barnett, the officer in medical charge of the 70th N.I., and he is confronted this evening by Mr. Adjutant Cox, who fills the onerous position of vice-president. Up and down the table red coats, blue coats, black coats are mixed up anyhow, and a general babel is in progress, intermingled with the clattering of knives and forks, and the clinking of glasses, the whole toned down somewhat by the music which is being poured forth by the band stationed under the covered bandstand in front of the mess-porch. Dinner over, taking advantage of a lull in the music, Dr. Barnett stands up, and says, "Mr. Vice, the Queen!" to which Mr. Cox responds, "Gentlemen, the Queen!" the band strikes up a few bars of the National Anthem, and, all standing, the toast is drunk, the toast of all others wherever Englishmen are and loyal hearts beat; then cheroots, and the walnuts and the wine. Let us take a look along the table; in the centre, on the right-hand side, is Colonel Plummer with his stars and medals, on his right is Mr. Musprat, on his left Mr. Rogers, exactly opposite is Major Browne, jovial and

beaming, his immediate supporters being Mr. Fellowes and Major Hogarth. The president, Dr. Barnett, is worth a look: a small wizened, dried-up looking elderly man, you see before you the most daring pig-sticker who ever drew first blood, that quiet unobtrusive manner covers nerves of iron and the courage of a lion (lion is the conventional term to use, but there is nothing on this earth so brave as a brave man; a man who knows what danger is and calmly takes the odds). He used to drive his poor little wife nearly out of her wits, so numerous were his falls, but being a light weight he got over them all, somehow, without serious damage, and here he is now a senior Surgeon-Major, with a charming grown-up daughter about to be taken off his hands, and no evil thoughts anent "the mighty boar." And so in fun and merriment, loud talk and louder laughter, till the Colonel gets up and the signal for leaving the table is given; some to billiards, some to whist, some to look on, some to long chairs in the broad verandah, a long Tricky* and a quiet chat.

* "A long tricky"—a variety of cheroot manufactured at Trickinopoly, hence the name; it is generally very long, and has a straw up the centre.

No one to bed though, this is the last night of the week ; it must be wound up in a satisfactory manner, and it is a kind of point of honour to see it out.

The 70th N.I. are noted for grilled bone, so at half-past one everybody once more gathers round the mess-table, even to the Collector and Mr. Rogers. Reilly, Fraser, and Foote, and, sooth to say, one or two older men too, notably Morgan and Thompson, with that gay dog Major Hogarth, have been very anxious that no one should slip away and thus spoil the completeness of the intended wind-up ; so an Argus-like watch has been kept to see that there were no deserters, no slinkers-off to early repose. Grilled bones and beer ! that was what the younger members of the party regaled themselves with. They have not come to years of indigestion yet, they are trying to hasten that happy period. Well, well, boys will be boys. Presently the company is aware that the Colonel is on his legs, immense enthusiasm is evoked by the fact. "Capital old boy the Colonel," murmurs Fraser rapturously ; "Bedad then an' he is that, a rare jule and no mistake," says Reilly who is

evidently warming up for a spree. The Colonel proposes the visitors' health, Major Hogarth responds ; the Collector sings the praises of the Dholpur eleven, Mr. Thompson replies, and proposes Bob's health, "The captain of our worthy opponents, his bad luck was indeed a lucky thing for us" he asserts ; Bob gets up and begins to splutter, "Um-unaccustomed to public speaking, um-overwhelmed with the honour um-um-um—" "Spit it out, old chap ; don't be nervous!" and Bob sinks back into his chair under an unmerciful, yet withal, good-natured fire of chaffing remarks ; then Mr. Rogers proposes the health of the ladies, which he does in rather a laboured speech, too long for the occasion, perhaps, full of "wise saws," and out of the way quotations, but he means well, and they have great fun when Balfour is put up on a chair and made to return thanks, which he does uncommonly well, and amusingly ; county councils, divided skirts, etc.; and Reilly *this time is* allowed to sing for "They are jolly good fellows," and is aided by the assembled company. Then singing is started and Morgan is called upon for the first song ; possessed of a very good baritone voice he sings very

well, and he gives them the following ditty : he calls it the Sportsman's Valhalla :—

To the hunting grounds we're going,
Far on the other shore ;
To those happy lands we're hurrying.
Evermore ! for evermore !

There we'll beat the lordly tiger,
There we'll ride the mighty boar,
There we'll walk the wily snipe, sirs,
Evermore ! for evermore !

There we'll rouse the cruel panther,
Hear his joy-inspiring roar,
Stalk the bison, and the sambhur,
Evermore ! for evermore !

There with jovial brother sportsmen,
Who have only gone before,
We will share the shadowy wine-cup,
Evermore ! for evermore !

Enthusiastic applause, and then Dr. Barnett sings "The Boar": he has not much of a voice, but his deeds in the saddle are well-known, and the song is very warmly received ; and now that the ball is started away they go ; the seniors such as the Colonel and the Collector, Major Browne and Dr. Barnett, do not remain very long, but some of them keep it up "till daylight doth appear." Morgan, as the secretary

and the man on whom most of the hard work has devolved, is carried round and round the room ; attempts are made at chairing Bob Anderson also, but he resists so vigorously that he is presently left alone. And so dies out the Lolapur week ; the remnant of the visitors depart by the mid-day train and Lolapur resumes its usual jog-trot.

THE END.

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